



Frank Kitson

*(Vandyk)*

# Gangs and Counter-gangs

MAJOR.  
FRANK KITSON

M.B.E., M.C.

WITH A FOREWORD BY  
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G.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O.

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR AND  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF, JERSEY  
FORMERLY C. IN C, KENYA

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Next I should like to thank Lt.-Colonel R. D. Poole for suggesting that I should write the book and for putting me in touch with a publisher who was prepared to show me how to present my story.

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Finally I should like to thank all the Europeans and Africans who worked with me in Kenya for their help and friendship. This book attempts to tell their story and if it brings their struggles to the attention of their countrymen it will achieve its purpose.

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In some photographs the faces of Africans have been obliterated. The people so treated were members of the Security Forces, or those who co-operated with them, and this measure has been taken for their protection. For the same reason, the names of the Africans have been changed in the text.

## FOREWORD

Frank Kitson's book will be of special interest to those of us who served in Kenya during the Mau Mau rebellion since few people could be told at the time of the special operations developed by him. But there are many lessons in his story which will be of equal interest to those whose business it is to study or take part in the restoration of law and order. The British Army has been kept busy with that kind of work in recent years.

Global war is an international affair and it is in the international field that our statesmen will strive to reach agreement to reduce the likelihood of such a calamity. But keeping control in our Colonies and Protectorates is our own affair. The likelihood of military support to our Colonial administration must be rated high. In Africa alone there are vast areas which under our guidance are moving towards a greater degree of self government. We are deliberately moving the responsibility more and more on to the shoulders of the local inhabitants. This involves risks to law and order which must be accepted if these people are to move from the benevolent autocracy of good Colonial administration to independence, with all the dangers, disturbances and upheavals which such a change entails. If this change is to be made smoothly, with firm foundations laid for the future, the timing must be controlled. The Colonial administration must not be stampeded into making the change because its administration has become so weak it cannot resist. It would be the worst possible service to the people of Africa to give independence against a background of confusion.

If the Army is required to intervene it should try to do so in such a way that it does not prejudice the natural progressive development of the territory. No lasting results will be obtained by the unintelligent use of force in all directions. Measures must be designed to support and protect the loyal members of the community and to round up the real trouble-makers who have resorted to force and lawlessness. If this can be done fairly and justly you will get the support of the waverers and the battle is half won. But to do this you must have a very good intelligence service. You must not be surprised to find that it is inadequate and your first task should be to build it up.

The need to develop a first-class intelligence system is obvious. In these internal security situations you must develop your intelligence service to meet your needs and you must not be content with a general picture and trends. You must know your enemy's mind, his organization and every detail you can possibly find out about him. Only when you know this will it be possible to deal with the root of the trouble and the leaders. Even when you have the information it is often difficult to make use of it quickly enough through the orthodox security forces. The secret of success of the Special Forces, as developed by Frank Kitson, was that they put themselves in a position to follow up their information instantaneously and to do something about it.

In operations of this kind it is extremely difficult for the soldier or policeman not to feel that he is being frustrated by rules and regulations which to him seem to be specially designed to assist the enemy and prevent him getting on with the job. It was only in the prohibited area, i.e. the forest, where the Security Forces could operate in an unrestricted manner. Elsewhere there were rules, and there had to be, to protect the innocent. In the Reserves, the European Settled Areas and in Nairobi these rules protected the gangs as well as the innocent. In spite of the disadvantages I insisted we must play the rules and I was most loyally supported by the Security Forces. Unfortunately this did not prevent a number of people who should have known better from lending their support to a smear campaign against the Security Forces. In operations of this kind you can take it for granted that you will be under constant criticism from certain sections of the Press and public. There is not much you can do about it except to stick to the rules and not to lose your temper with your critics.

I have seen the British Army in war, in success and in adversity. I have also seen it undertake the entire administration of large areas of Germany—a non-military task but one which was carried out superbly for nearly a year after the German surrender. Since then the Army has had tasks in Malaya and Kenya which it has brought to a successful conclusion. The Army is a versatile machine. Its officers and men are capable of adapting themselves quickly and readily to new conditions. In fact in my experience the British officer enjoys the challenge of unusual situations and he has marked ability for solving them.

The gallant and resourceful author has given us a book which will fire the imagination of the young and give much food for thought to those who have to organize or direct similar operations.

*Chapter One*

## **A NEW JOB**

BEING asthmatic I was no use to the Navy so I had to join the Army instead. This caused some stir in the family, but as I was obviously unsuited to the Church there was no alternative short of breaking a father-to-son tradition which has lasted for over two hundred years. In fact there was little harm done as my only brother was in the Navy and there is something to be said for a family not having all its eggs in one basket. My housemaster at Stowe was actually pleased and said something about a 'narrow escape': he was biased, however, having been a regular soldier himself for twenty years.

I joined the Rifle Brigade in January 1945 and after eighteen months in England went to Germany as a lieutenant. I was still there seven years later and though I had enjoyed the life at first, by July 1953 I was desperate for a change. At that time I was twenty-six.

One evening I was sitting in a leaguer area after a day of exercises with our affiliated tank regiment. I was damp and cold and heartily sick of the pine trees and heather which are the only things that grow on the German training areas and which had come to symbolize all that I disliked in my military life.

There was little inducement to sit around. A wet west wind was chasing away the remains of the afternoon storm and drops of water were dripping from a branch into my mess tin to form a puddle flecked with congealed fat in the bottom. The other officers had already crept into their clammy

sleeping bags with the exception of one platoon commander who always fell asleep while eating his dinner. Because I had been sitting still, the wet bits of my uniform which were in direct contact with my skin had become warm. Movement would upset this arrangement but eventually I had to walk out into the heather to pay my respects to nature. There I met a despatch rider who had appeared with orders for me to go to the nearest telephone and contact Battalion Headquarters which was in barracks sixty miles away.

After some trouble I was connected with the Adjutant who told me that I had been posted to Kenya to do a job connected with Intelligence. He knew no details except that I was to go at once. I was not concerned about the details, I was so glad to be leaving Germany.

The next few weeks were very busy ones for me and by the first of August I was ready to leave for Africa as required. I spent the following eighteen days standing by the telephone at home waiting for a summons to the airfield, but nothing happened. This was most annoying because I could have had a very good leave if I had been allowed to go away properly: there is not much one can do if one is kept at twenty-four-hours notice to move.

During the waiting period my first wild excitement at leaving Germany had begun to wear off and had given way to a more sober form of elation. In this state I could see that there were some aspects of my past life which I should leave with regret. I did not imagine for example that in Kenya I should have the opportunity for going to the opera or playing bridge. I would sadly miss riding my horses in the Rhine Army races which I had been doing for some years with great enjoyment, though with consistent lack of success. I doubted whether I should have much time to spare for trout fishing and above all I knew I should miss the many wonderful opportunities for shooting which I had during my time in Germany; and by shooting I don't mean plugging holes in targets.

One good aspect of my enforced period of waiting was that it gave me a chance to find out something about Kenya. I had seen the headlines in the newspapers when the Emergency had started in October of the previous year, and I remembered a striking picture of Jomo Kenyatta who was supposed to be the Mau Mau leader. Unfortunately he had appeared in an animal skin carrying a spear so I had a distorted idea of the rebellion from the start. A few months later—in March—I had read about the horrible massacre at Lari. But after that I had not registered any of the events which had been going on in the Colony, though the Mau Mau were associated in my mind with all that was foul and terrible in primitive savagery.

With this background I read several books. First I discovered where Kenya is in relation to the rest of the world. Next I found out that although the Colony is about six hundred miles long and four hundred broad, only a small area—one hundred miles by seventy—was affected by the rebellion. This was the country occupied by the Kikuyu tribe and the European lands nearby.

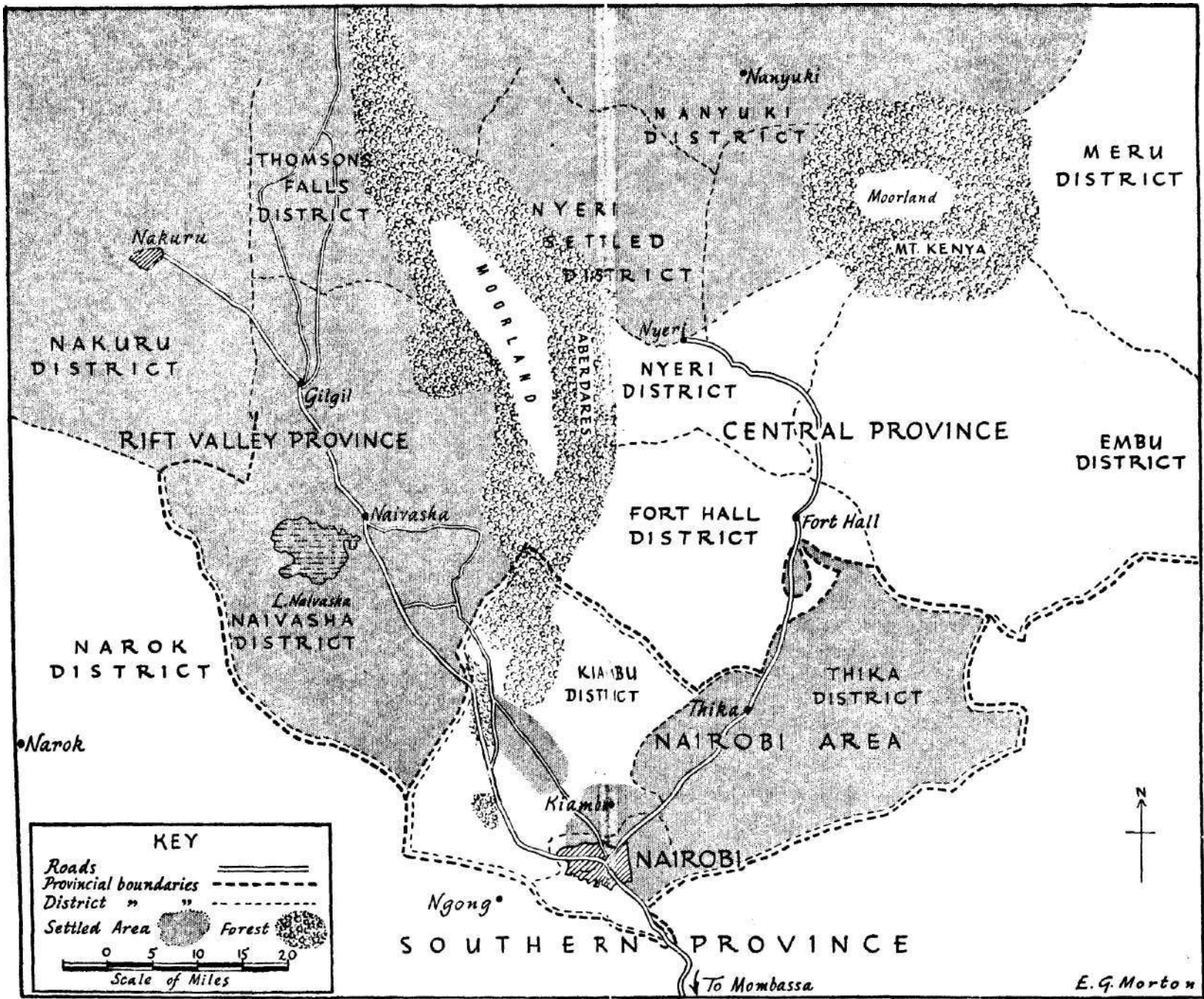
The Kikuyu tribe is the largest in Kenya. Together with its associated tribes, the Embu and Meru, it numbered about one and three quarter million people in 1953. They had been living in the same general area for several centuries before the arrival of white man in Africa and had developed a system of government based on Committees of Elders rather than on Chiefs or Kings. This had not come about as a result of contact with Western ideas of government even though there might be a superficial resemblance to early ideas of democracy.

Although the various books which I read were not agreed as to exactly what life was like for the Kikuyu before the arrival of the white man in the last decade of the nineteenth century I soon saw that there was one factor which influenced them more than everything else put together: fear.


First the Kikuyu had been frightened of raids made by other tribes, particularly the Avarlike Masai, who had forced them to live near the protective forests. This had greatly restricted the amount of land which the Kikuyu could farm. The next great menace to the tribe had come from Arab slave dealers who used to make expeditions from the Coast in search of human booty. Some authorities maintain that the slavers would have destroyed the tribe altogether had the British not intervened. Another terror came in the form of fearful epidemics which would sweep through the country unchecked by medical knowledge, carrying off huge numbers of the tribe and their cattle.


To combat the unruly chances which governed their lives, the Kikuyu relied mainly on magic and therein lay the greatest of all the horrors which beset them. Most witch-doctors were not malign in the sense of wishing harm to their clients. On the contrary, they doubtless did their best. On the other hand they sat in the middle of a web of superstition which bound the whole tribe in thrall to an unseen world of spirits, omens, curses and blood.


One final thing I understood from my reading. During the half century in which the British had ruled Kenya they had dispelled the fears which had formerly come from raiders, slavers and disease, but the fear of magic was still a powerful force. As I sat at home reading about the





**KEY**

Roads 

Provincial boundaries 

District " " 

Settled Area  Forest 

0 5 10 15 20  
Scale of Miles



E. G. Morton



witch-doctors and their ways, I too felt that fear, flickering faintly across the four thousand miles which separated me from the Kikuyu.

At this time I also learned a little about the European community in Kenya. From the beginning of the century the government had encouraged British people to settle in those parts of the country which were not at the time inhabited by African tribes, and most of the land so occupied had been totally uninhabited. Unfortunately the British had also settled in one tiny area which had previously been occupied by the Kikuyu but which was vacant at the time because the Africans had abandoned it after a serious smallpox and rinderpest epidemic. Although the Kikuyu had received disproportionately large compensation in other ways, they still nursed a grievance over this matter. By the start of the Emergency there were about 40,000 Europeans in Kenya, some of whom were living on farms near the Kikuyu lands.

In addition to the books which I read, I picked up a pamphlet one day on Waterloo station written by Mr Fenner Brockway. This did nothing to improve my morale because it sowed seeds of doubt in my mind as to whether we were handling the Emergency in a civilized manner. Furthermore, after reading the pamphlet, I was not quite sure whether the British had any right to be ruling Kenya at all. Fortunately my morale was in good order so I suffered very little from the experience. All the same it is not pleasant from a soldier's point of view to have the cause for which he may have to fight called in question by a Member of Parliament.

When eventually I did leave England my knowledge of Kenya was more or less as I have described it. My knowledge of Intelligence was even more scanty as I had not even done a battalion intelligence officer's course. Sitting next to me in the aeroplane was a red-haired subaltern in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry named Ian Feild. He too had been posted to the same sort of job as me. During the three-day journey we gave each other an outline account of our lives. In addition he told me a funny story about whether the indentation in a bush hat should be circular or longitudinal.

On our arrival at Nairobi airport I was surprised to find that the temperature was only that of an English summer day. We were met by a warrant officer from G.H.Q., who had the top of a woollen vest showing in the V collar of his bush jacket. This was not only unmilitary but also indicated that the temperature might well have been lower had the sun not been shining.

I wanted to go at once to look for a gang, but the Sergeant Major's instructions were to instal us in one of the Nairobi hotels where we could

stay until our final destinations had been arranged. From the back of a Land-Rover I got one or two blurred glimpses of the city as we drove through. I distinctly remember the strangeness of seeing that most of the people were black. I noticed houses that seemed to be made entirely out of petrol tins and sacking: nearer the centre of the town they were built of more normal material. I saw a policeman in what looked like a red tin hat standing on a small platform directing the traffic. We passed a large cinema and—for no apparent reason—a field of pure mud. We swept by the three-star hotels, looked hopefully in the direction of a two-star hotel, and finally stopped outside one that obviously rated no stars at all. The Sergeant Major said goodnight and left us.

Ian and I were taken to a room on the second floor which we were to share. We unpacked and went to the bar, where we got our first sight of Kenya Europeans: all had immense revolvers strung around their bodies. In fact we were probably looking at a selection of lesser Government servants and commercialities but we imagined them to be real settlers and were duly impressed at the thought of the rugged lives they must be leading.

Soon afterwards we went for a walk in Nairobi. By this time it was dark but there still seemed to be a lot of Africans wandering about. The main streets were well lit but not the smaller ones, and as we walked past the entrance to one of these I saw two or three men squatting round a watchman's fire some fifty yards away. I had been interested to see the Africans at close range in the street. I may even have been a bit excited. I had thought so much about the notorious Mau Mau and their murders, mutilations and brutalities that I was naturally elated at last to be on the threshold of such things. But the sight of the three men round their fire had a different effect. This brought back to my mind stories of another sort. Stories of age-old magic rites, of bestiality, obscenity and the power of unseen forces. Again I felt the uneasiness which I had experienced in England but this time it was more than a faint flicker.

Next morning was Saturday and Ian Feild and I went to G.H.Q. thinking that we should discover exactly what we were to do. We were both desperately afraid that the Emergency would end before we could become involved and hoped that we might reach the battle zone that afternoon. Unfortunately no one in G.H.Q. seemed to understand the urgency of our case: we were given a lot of forms to fill in and then dismissed with little extra knowledge but with the promise of a flight over the troubled area in the mail plane on Monday. Meanwhile we were to read a book by Elspeth Huxley called *The Red Strangers* and were to receive our proper briefing on Tuesday.

None of the many books I had read about war had warned me to expect a cessation of effort on Sunday, but of course I had always read about commanders in action and never about government machinery. I was therefore unprepared for the disaster of having to waste a whole day and was miserable as a result. To fill in time, Ian and I went to morning service in Nairobi Cathedral and read the book we had been given. I can remember very little about the service except that the sermon lasted for six minutes longer than I think desirable, that is to say it went on for sixteen minutes. I sat next to an African woman who had bad halitosis and I was surprised to find that there was no segregation of the races into separate parts of the building. I remember even less about the book, which dealt with a Kikuyu family and their reactions to the advent of the British to Kenya. One of the few things that stuck in my mind was the excellent Kikuyu system which obliged the women to do most of the work and carry all the heavy loads, thereby leaving the men free to sit about waiting for the Masai to raid. Even after the British put a stop to Masai raids the Kikuyu abided by this distribution of labour.

Next morning an army Land-Rover collected us and took us to Nairobi West airport, where we met an officer of the Kenya Police Reserve Airwing. The Kenya Police Reserve (K.P.R.) was manned mainly by part-time Europeans who did police duty in addition to their daily work. The whole organization was part of the Kenya Police and its members did patrols, worked on staffs in the headquarters, and helped in police stations in addition to various other less common jobs. They also operated an Air Wing consisting of a number of light aircraft.

After a short time, taken up with meeting people, we were led out by the pilot of a Piper Racer and strapped into the two available seats. I surreptitiously swallowed a 'Kwell' to make certain of keeping my breakfast in place. The pilot climbed in beside me and gesticulated wildly at a friend outside. There was a bang like a 12-bore going off and the propeller started to revolve: a moment later there was a smell of powder as though the 12-bore was being reloaded. The pilot revved the engine a few times and started to taxi out onto the runway. A moment later, the coarse brown grass was whipping by at great speed, then it dropped away and lay on its side as we banked over the Game Park. A herd of zebra galloped off kicking up a cloud of dust, and a giraffe flashed past at an absurd angle. A moment later and we were upright once more, gaining height and flying over the built-up area of Nairobi. I glanced over my shoulder at Ian Feild whose red hair was hidden under a pale blue airman's helmet. He reminded me of the lady in the advertisement for bathing caps but

seemed to be the right colour. The sunshine flooded through the perspex cover of the cockpit and as the aircraft steadied up on a northerly course I realized that I had survived my first ascent in a light aircraft.

For the next quarter of an hour we flew over country owned and farmed by Europeans and known as Settled Area. It was easy to identify from the air because of the regular pattern of the crops and because the huts used by the African farm workers were grouped together in labour lines which were usually next to the farmer's house. We were flying above the main road running north from Nairobi and after a time the pilot pointed to what looked like a small shanty town out of a cowboy film. This was Thika and the Headquarters of the District over which we had been flying. For the purposes of government, Kenya is divided into provinces each consisting of a number of districts. Districts vary in size but are roughly equivalent to an English county.

Soon after passing Thika the pattern below us changed. Sharp ridges and deep valleys ran at right angles to our line of flight until they joined the Aberdare mountain range like the teeth of a comb joining the handle. These mountains were twenty miles to the west of us but plainly visible, though the higher parts lay under cloud. Instead of regular rows of dark green coffee the country became a patchwork of different browns and greens which turned out to be small and irregularly shaped areas of crops interspersed with woods and clearings and grass fields. Dotted around for no apparent reason were little groups of round thatched huts. Once we saw smoke rising idly from a fire. On several occasions we saw the black shells of burnt buildings. We were over the Fort Hall district of the Kikuyu Reserve.

Our aircraft landed at an airstrip near Fort Hall township but we did not have a chance to go far because after unloading a sack of letters we took off again and flew on to the Headquarters of the province at Nyeri. This time we got as far as a hut which was being used as an officers' mess by the R.A.F. pilots of some Harvards. Harvards, though out of date, were apparently the most suitable aircraft for strafing the forest: more modern types were too fast for manoeuvring in the steep crevices of the Aberdares or Mount Kenya.

After leaving Nyeri we flew on a westerly course to take us over the top of the Aberdares. As we got nearer to the mountains the ridges and valleys in the Reserve became steeper, and the crops became more scanty. Finally they stopped altogether and the country was covered by dense forest which looked just like the pictures I had seen of tropical jungle. Before the Emergency these forests had been occupied by a tribe called

the Wanderobo and by other Africans who worked in saw-mills or for foresters. At the time of our flight the forests were gazetted as prohibited areas, and were inhabited only by game animals and gangsters.

We flew up a valley with forest below and on either side. Ahead was a wall of mist which occasionally broke to show the distant ridge of the mountain range. As we flew on, I noticed that there were fewer big trees below: more and more of the land was covered by thick bamboo. Soon it was only bamboo, as the altitude was too high for trees to grow. Looking down, I thought of the gangsters I knew were living there. I strained my eyes to catch a sight of one, but to no avail. The aircraft pushed on into the edge of the mist and bucked vigorously as the first puff of vapour hit the wing tips. Below I saw that the bamboo was thinning and giving way to bare moorland—bog, rock and mere. Again we were surrounded by mist and visibility dropped to a few yards. Then it cleared for a moment and we saw ahead of us a mighty crag at the end of the valley. I was greatly disturbed and the pilot did not seem too happy either. He banked sharply and turned back for a bit, then gained height and took another course to cross the main ridge further to the north. This time we stayed in the cloud for some minutes but were evidently high enough to be out of danger. The next time the mist cleared we had crossed the Aberdares and were flying above tree forest again: a moment or two later we were over the open grain-growing land of the Rift Valley province. We landed at Nakuru and went to the officers' mess of the King's African Rifles Training Centre for lunch.

The King's African Rifles consisted of a number of battalions of African troops with British officers. Most of the battalions were scattered around the Emergency area, though one or two were in other colonies. The Training Centre had the somewhat impersonal atmosphere found in the larger military establishments. After lunch we returned to Nairobi.

Next morning Ian and I went once more to G.H.Q., which consisted of a number of wooden huts housing six or eight offices each which opened onto a covered verandah with a wooden floor. We went into the room of the senior Intelligence Staff officer—Major Holmes—to get our briefing. For the next two hours we were told all the details which I had been longing to hear ever since I knew that I was coming to Kenya. No longer was it necessary to make do with information about the situation as it existed when the British came to Kenya. John Holmes told us what was happening now—August 1953.

Most of the trouble was going on in the Kikuyu Reserve districts of Kiambu, Fort Hall and Nyeri and in the Embu and Meru districts adjoin-

ing them. There were also numerous acts of violence occurring in those districts occupied by white settlers which bordered on the Kikuyu lands and in Nairobi.

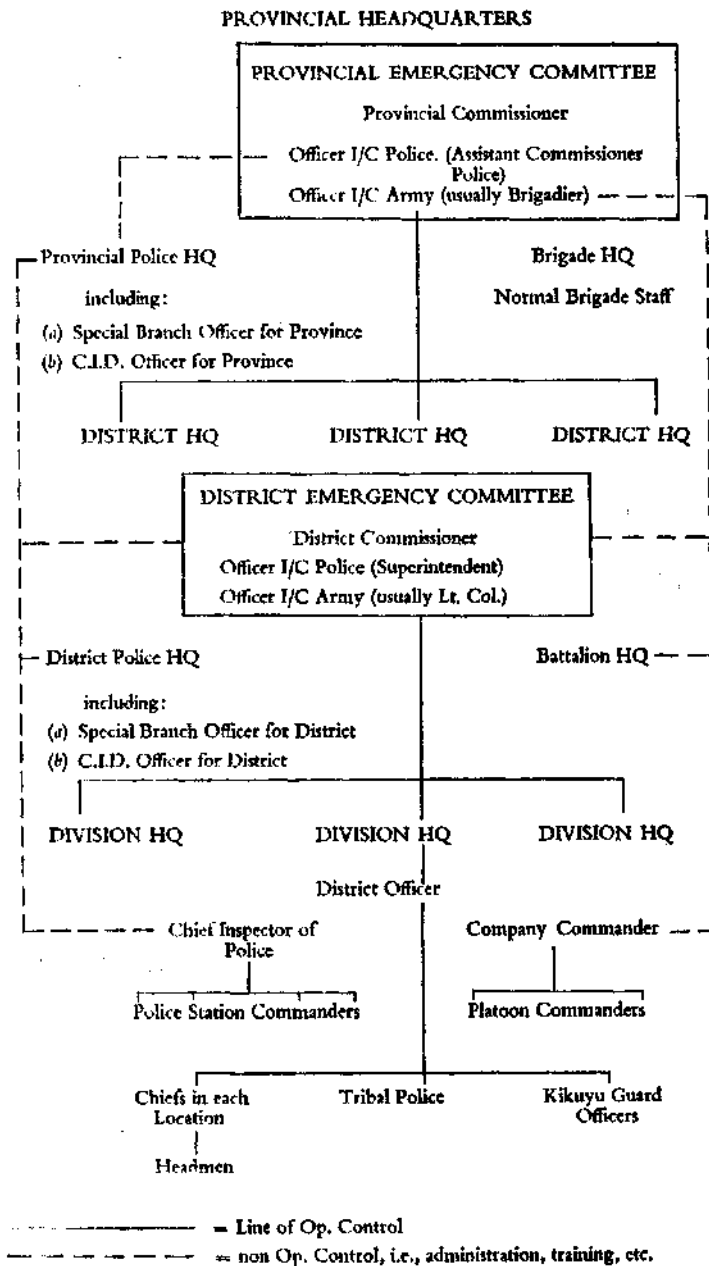
Each district in the Reserve consisted of a number of divisions and each division consisted of a number of locations. Districts, divisions and locations were governed by District Commissioners, District Officers and Chiefs respectively. Collectively these people were known as the Administration, that is to say they were members of the Colonial Service. The District Commissioners and District Officers were British and the Chiefs were African. Each Chief had under him a number of Headmen scattered around his location.

In order to prosecute the struggle against Mau Mau, Emergency Committees were formed in Districts and Divisions. In every case the District Commissioner or District Officer would be the chairman of the local committee. The other 'official' members would be the senior police officer for the District or Division and the senior army officer. In addition certain prominent local men might be asked to join the Committees as 'Unofficial' members to give advice on various matters. The Emergency Committees controlled the activities of the Security Forces—a term used to describe the army, the police and the retainers of the officers of the Administration.

In August 1953 there were three sorts of soldiers in Kenya. First there were the battalions of the King's African Rifles (K.A.R.). Next there were a number of ordinary British infantry battalions brought in to deal with the trouble. Finally there was a unit of the territorial army called the Kenya Regiment. This unit was designed to produce officers for the K.A.R. in the event of full scale war. It consisted of young European settlers who had been called to the colours at the start of the Emergency. The Kenya Regiment, consisting as it did entirely of young potential officers, most of whom had spent their whole lives with Africans, was the most formidable military force confronting the Mau Mau.

The chain of command in the Kenya Police corresponded roughly with that of the officers of the Administration. Under the senior police officer in each District there would be subordinate officers in the Divisions and under them again would be officers commanding the police stations. In addition to the uniformed branches of the police there was also at each District headquarters a plain clothes section for crime detection (C.I.D.) and another for Intelligence (Special Branch).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Kenya Police were in fact organized into Areas, Divisions and subdivisions corresponding to the Provinces, Districts and Divisions of the Administration. For convenience in this book I am sticking to the terms used by the Administration.



The forces controlled directly by the Administration were the Tribal Police and the Kikuyu Guard. The Tribal Police had nothing whatsoever to do with the Kenya Police but were the personal retainers of the District Commissioners and District Officers. Soon after the start of the Emergency the Administration had enlarged its forces by forming the Kikuyu Guard which was made up of loyal African volunteers operating in small groups throughout the Reserves, centred round specially built Kikuyu guard posts. By August 1953 there were about 30,000 members of the Kikuyu Guard.

Opposed to the security forces was the Mau Mau. The seeds of this movement had first taken root many years before the war when a few intelligent Kikuyu had managed to get themselves far better educated than the rest of their tribe by gaining entry to the universities of Europe. They arrived back in Kenya afterwards hoping for opportunities which would enable them to make use of all the learning they had absorbed abroad. They were conscious of having developed powers unknown to all those Africans who had stayed at home and they wanted to be able to put them to good use at once—for the sake of themselves, their families and their tribe. They wanted jobs and influence, but there were no openings of the sort they were looking for. They were clever people and they became bitter.

These frustrated men looked round for a popular grievance which they could exploit in order to satisfy their craving for influence. At the time the Kikuyu tribe had expanded greatly because British rule had sheltered it from disease, Masai raids and the Arab slavers. As a result they were very short of land on which to live. All around their Reserves the Kikuyu could see few Europeans farming large acreages. It did not matter that the land had never belonged to the tribe, nor that African farming methods would be useless for the cultivation of most of it. Land is sacred to the Kikuyu and a small part of the European-owned area had once belonged to their forebears. All the ingredients were there for a holy war.

The existence of a popular cause and some clever men to exploit it would not in itself have caused Mau Mau, but there was a third factor. In the past there had frequently been small uprisings led by popular prophets who induced a state of mass hysteria into their followers. They indulged in obscene rites, and ritual killings by which means they rallied to their cause the powerful influence of magic, and at the same time killed off their opponents. If the frustrated few could combine the primitive force of such a movement with the popular appeal of the land issue they might get the whole tribe to follow them.

In earlier days these popular prophets were opposed by the elders who

were backed by the whole complex pattern of tribal law, custom and religion, but by 1952 their influence had largely disappeared. The most important reason for this was that missionaries had been chipping away the influence of the local God whose name is Ngai. Had they succeeded in replacing him with their own God, all would have been well. But they were only half way there; they had discredited the old without gaining acceptance for the new. The situation was aggravated by the diversity of creeds hawked round by the missionaries and by the inability of the Church to distinguish between Christ's teaching, which applies equally to Africans and Europeans, and Western theology, much of which is unsuited to Africa. In addition the political, economic and social structure of the Kikuyu had all received hard knocks in the process of civilization.

What happened was that some men formed a society called Mau Mau, from amongst the members of a legal political organization called the Kenya African Union (K.A.U.). Making use of K.A.U. branches which existed all over the Colony they started to expand the society. Dipping into the murky past of the religious fanatics they devised awesome oaths which were intended to bind the members together with a chain of superstition. They also devised a ritual so obscene that the initiates were driven beyond the pale of tribal custom as expounded by tradition. Thus they bound their followers together in the most compelling way possible and at the same time forced them outside the structure of the tribe and beyond the influence of the elders. By so doing they hoped to grab the leadership for themselves.

The founders of the movement intended to unite the tribe first and then confront the Government with certain demands, relying on the strength of their following to give them the necessary weight. Doubtless they were prepared for some killing of Europeans if it proved necessary, but that would be when they wished and for a definite purpose. Unfortunately for the leaders matters got out of control. Mau Mau members, having whetted their appetites on Kikuyu who refused to join them, got tired of waiting for the great day and started killing a few settlers. Then they murdered those chiefs and elders who protested. In time the Government became alarmed, and arrested some of the well known leaders, but by then the whole affair was out of control.

The full horror of civil war soon clamped down on African and European alike. Hundreds of Kikuyu with no sympathy for Mau Mau were pledging themselves to the movement for fear of what would happen to them if they refused. Many who resisted defied the evil only to experience the terror of a call in the dark followed by an agonizing death often

in company with their wives and children. The Government were unable to protect them.

Though the torment endured by these people was as ghastly as could be imagined, it was probably no worse than the mental anguish felt by those Kikuyu who joined Mau Mau and were subsequently faced with the job of betraying and murdering their white employers. Many of these Africans had lived all their lives with European families and occupied positions of trust and friendship.

Settlers in remote areas near the Kikuyu Reserves were in difficulties themselves from Mau Mau gangs who raided their farms, mutilated their livestock, burnt their buildings and murdered their families. As reports of servants betraying their masters became more common, widespread suspicion descended on the White Highlands. This gave an extra savage twist to the general feeling of hopelessness, fear and foreboding which engulfed all races in the early stages of the Emergency. Only the Mau Mau were happy and theirs was the forced happiness of the drug addict as he sinks ever deeper into his abandoned state.

It is difficult to know quite how the movement developed after the Government declared a state of Emergency in October 1952. Long before that time several hundred Kikuyu were living in the forest which covered the slopes of Mount Kenya and the Aberdares: most of them were fugitives from justice. Immediately afterwards many more joined them from the Reserves either because they were afraid of being arrested as Mau Mau members or because they had received orders to do so from their local leaders. Gradually the crowd in the forest sorted themselves out into gangs, and commanders came forward who were not of the educated type at all. They were men who claimed their authority because they were stronger, braver or more ruthless than their companions.

Shortly afterwards the Government uprooted all Kikuyu working on European farms in certain parts of the Settled Area and returned them to that part of the Reserve from which their families had originally sprung. Many of these people had few contacts left there and turned to existence in the forest as being preferable to building up a new life in the hard world outside. In this way the gangs received heavy reinforcements during the first few months of the Emergency.

Gradually Mau Mau became organized for war and its members divided themselves into two groups known as the Militant Wing and the Passive Wing. The Militant Wing lived mostly in the forest and consisted of gang members. The Passive Wing comprised those people who provided money, supplies, shelter, recruits or intelligence for the gangs. They

lived in the towns, on the farms, or in the Reserve. While carrying on their normal work they formed a network of committees all over the area to fulfil their obligations to the movement. They were just as brutal as the gangsters and organized oathing ceremonies and killings to achieve their ends. The term 'Passive Wing' was one of the most staggering misnomers of Emergency terminology.

By the middle of 1953 it was evident that there was no central Mau Mau authority. It seemed instead as though three separate spheres of influence existed; one in Mount Kenya, one in the Aberdares, and one around Nairobi. Such information as was available showed that the Mau Mau was an amazing compound of craziness, efficiency, superstition, courage, detailed planning and boastfulness. As an example of boastfulness it is interesting to recall that one of the leaders described himself as Prime Minister of the Kenya Parliament, Commander in Chief of the Gikuyu and Mumbi<sup>1</sup> Trinity Armies and Townswatch Battalions, President of the Kenya Young Stars Association, President of the Gikuyu and Mumbi Itungati Association, President of the Kenya African Woman's League and Chairman of the Kinyarikalo Memorial Club! A fanciful exercise in megalomania!

In contrast to this the gang organizations were very efficient, though each little unit was run by a committee. Gang leaders were also appointed but in theory their authority was only supreme in action. These gangs all had fancy names of one sort or another like the regiments of the British army. The Aberdare gangs whose members came from the District of Nyeri were known as the Ituma Demi Armies, and the gangs from Fort Hall called themselves the Gikuyu Iregi armies. One of the gangs operating in south-west Mount Kenya was known as the Hika Hika Battalion, the companies of which were known as Rumuri Company, 77 L.M.T. Company, 3 Hika Hika Company, 4 Hika Hika Company, B.I. Company and 375 I.W. Sarema Company. Needless to say they all got hopelessly muddled up by the end of the Emergency.

The Mau Mau movement was evidently organized in great detail and was extremely complex. It has never been easy to assess the number of terrorists there were in the gangs at any one moment. The official estimate in August 1953 was about 8,000 but we later discovered that the figure must have been at least 10,000 and possibly as high as 15,000. Another factor was that gang strengths fluctuated according to the season and the case with which the terrorists could get food.

<sup>1</sup> Gikuyu and Mumbi were the founders of the Tribe and correspond roughly to Adam and Eve.

Another limiting factor was the supply of arms and ammunition. Most of the ammunition came from the Passive Wing who collected it, if necessary, one round at a time. They also supplied arms though the gangs collected a lot by raiding. Furthermore, a large number of guns were made by the terrorists themselves from old pipes, door bolts, wood, nails and elastic bands. Such weapons were not very reliable but they made a bang which was good for morale. They also looked like real weapons, especially at night, and this was good for terrorizing the population. Occasionally they exploded in the face of their owners, which was good for a laugh according to the Kikuyu mentality. They therefore had their uses.

Altogether the Mau Mau seemed to be a fairly formidable force. In spite of the comic names and crazy weapons there was not much to laugh about. Few people realized that the ragged terrorists whose antics were occasionally reported in the newspapers belonged to such an intricate and well ordered system as existed in August 1953.

After Major Holmes had finished his brief he came to the business of allotting us to Districts. From what we had heard and from looking at the incident map on the wall of the office, it was obvious that Nyeri would be the most lively place to go to, followed by Fort Hall. Embu would be much less exciting and Kiambu practically useless. I could see from the pins in the map that there hadn't been any murders in Kiambu for nearly three weeks.

Ian Feild received his orders first, and much to my annoyance was given Fort Hall. Nyeri was apparently allotted already to another officer but there was a chance that I should get Embu. Instead I was told that I was to go to Kiambu.

I have never discovered why John Holmes allotted the jobs in that way. Perhaps he thought that Ian was the more soldierly looking man. He had been in East Africa before and his khaki drill uniform was properly organized so that he looked less of a shambles than I did. Perhaps John felt that as an older man I would have a better chance of getting along with the people at Kiambu who tended to be more senior than those in Fort Hall. At any rate I was greatly vexed at my luck and made it apparent. As a consolation I was told that I could keep an eye on the neighbouring district of Thika which, though it was admittedly only Settled Area, had been the scene of one or two murders during the past month.

So far, all we knew about our job was that we were to be attached to the Special Branch of the police in our respective districts to help them get information. The next step in our education was to be a visit to the head of Special Branch who we supposed would tell us exactly what we

were to do. I was nervous at the prospect of meeting a senior policeman face to face. I had never spoken to one before and had the normal young man's outlook towards the Force in general.

As we left John's office there was a sudden downpour. We ran to the car-park but even before we got there the path had sunk beneath an inch or two of swirling muddy water into which vast drops of rain fell, marking the surface like the rising of thousands of fish. Yellow flowers growing outside one of the offices bent under the force of the wind and dipped their leaves into the red mud which had been their bed a few moments earlier.

We left G.H.Q. in a staff car and drove over tarmac steaming from the onslaught of cold water. Far above a stiff breeze ripped through the tops of the blue gum trees lining the road. We went down a steep hill leaving C.I.D. Headquarters on our left and the cathedral on the right. Soon afterwards we stopped outside some shops, went into a doorway and up a flight of stairs. At the first landing was a gate behind which stood a policeman who asked us our business. A moment or two later we entered the office of the Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Special Branch of Kenya.

Mr Gribble proved to be every bit as imposing as I had imagined. He had a soldierly moustache and a smart khaki uniform embellished with gorgets of blue and silver: on his shoulder he had badges of rank which looked very like those of a Field Marshal.

He talked to us and showed us some pictures of a gang. The pictures had been taken by the terrorists themselves and were designed to be shown in the reserves for propaganda purposes. The gangsters seemed to have plenty of weapons and we were able to identify rifles, stens, lanchesters, shotguns and pistols. They seemed a formidable looking lot and for a moment I forgot that I was going to dull old Kiambu and visualized myself chasing these men around the Aberdares.

In due course our interview came to an end. But still we did not know what our job was to be. Not even Mr Gribble seemed able to tell us much about it. So we went back to try and get John Holmes to give us some guidance on the subject.

He had already explained how the Special Branch of the police was responsible for getting all the intelligence required in the Colony. Now he pointed out how impossible it was for them to do so since the commitments had grown to colossal proportions due to the growth of Mau Mau. The army however were dependent on Special Branch to produce the information on which they could act so they were not prepared to sit idly



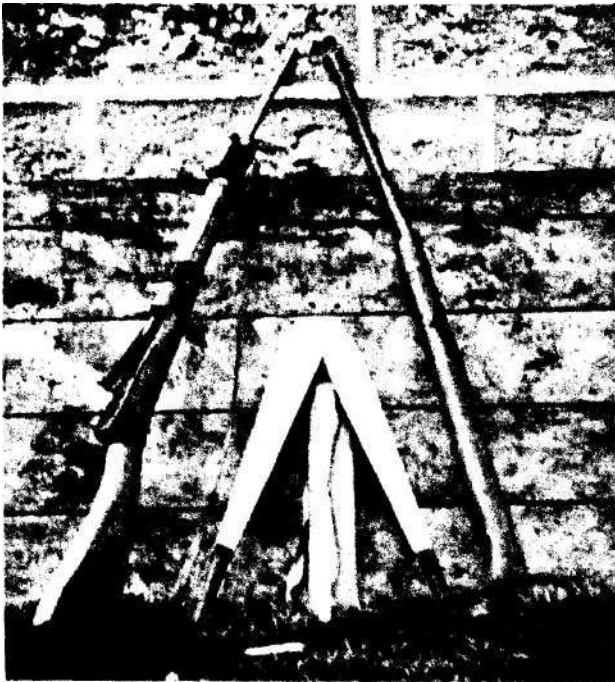
Mau Mau gang posing for propaganda picture (film found on dead terrorist)

by without doing what they could to help. As a first step the army had lent the police a number of sergeants from the Kenya Regiment to work in Special Branch as Field Intelligence Assistants (F.I.A.s). In most cases, the Special Branch officers had posted their F.I.A.s to outlying parts of their districts in the hope that they might get hold of some useful information.

John Holmes reckoned that we should go and live with the Special Branch officers in our districts, and take off their shoulders the burden of day-to-day visiting and organizing the F.I.A.s. We might also help sort out any information which the Special Branch officer had collected, particularly if it would be of use to the army. Clearly it would be splendid if we could also get hold of some information on our own account but no one expected us to be able to do that. After all we did not know the language, we had no training in the methods used for getting information and we had virtually no funds at our disposal.

. We had imposing titles. We would be known as District Military Intelligence officers (D.M.I.O.s). John Holmes was quite open about the fact that no one knew what the job would entail. It would depend on what we made of it. One last point: if we could not be of any use could we please not be a nuisance?

This all seemed good to me. Next day I was to go to Kiambu. Meanwhile I had some laundry to collect.



Mau Mau weapons:  
home made rifle,  
home made shotgun,  
two simis, kiboko



Denis Kearney



*Chapter Two*

## EARLY DAYS

THE District Commissioner governed Kiambu from a long stone bungalow containing the offices of his administrative staff. Round about were smaller buildings for the magistrate's court, police headquarters and other government departments. A hundred yards away on top of a small rise was the police station securely surrounded by barbed wire and spiked stakes. There was a lawn in front of the main offices and the buildings were well spread out. Scarlet and orange bougainvillea gave colour to the scene and magnificent trees reaching up towards the sky gave shade. This group of buildings was known as the 'Boma': it seemed to contain the essence of English influence.

Beyond the police station was the post office, the store from which the settlers bought their household requirements, and the native hospital. Further away toward the Reserve was the African market and some huts. On the other side of the Boma, towards the coffee farms and Nairobi, were a number of bungalows each set in a small garden and used by the more senior police and government officials. On the outskirts of the community was the European Club overlooking a golf course.

The headquarters of one of the King's African Rifles battalions was set up in one of the bungalows. I arrived in Kiambu just in time to see a bugler, smart as paint in khaki drill and a scarlet fez, blowing the dinner call. I was not expected at all, let alone at lunch time, but the officers of the K.A.R. battalion very kindly took me in. They had two rooms of the

bungalow to use as dining-room and sitting-room but they slept in tents in the garden. I was duly given a tent.

After lunch I went to the police headquarters to find the Special Branch officer, Ken Goodale, an assistant superintendent. I found him in his office in the furthest corner of the building. My first impression was of a very tall, very thin and very dark young man with a big nose and smoke stained fingers. He was wearing a brown tweed jacket and grey flannel trousers. I was agreeably surprised to find him friendly and he even seemed glad that I had come. I started to tell him that no one knew quite what I was meant to do but he evidently didn't think that mattered. There was so much to be done in Special Branch that I could do more or less anything and still be an asset. He suggested that I should immediately instal myself at the spare desk in his office and work from there.

We talked for some time and then he suggested that we should go to his bungalow. For the next hour we had tea and cigarettes, then we switched to cigarettes and whisky. Goodale continued to talk, pausing only for lengthy bouts of coughing. He was obviously very tired. Ken talked about the District of Kiambu and told me how it consisted mainly of Kikuyu Reserve though several pockets of European Settled Area were included in it. The important part was of course the Reserve in which between three and four hundred thousand Kikuyu lived in an area fifty miles long and thirty wide. The Fort Hall Reserve lay to the north of the District and the Settled Area of Thika was to the east. Along the western side was the great Rift Valley, though in the north west the District was bounded by the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest which was merely another name for the southern end of the main Aberdare Forest. The District was divided into three divisions, each governed by a district officer. From north to south these were called Gatundu, Githunguri and Chura. South of the Kiambu border was open grazing land belonging to the Masai tribe but the south-east corner of the district joined the city to Nairobi.

Throughout his talk Goodale kept coming back to the one thing which he held to be the most important factor in any consideration of the situation in Kiambu. This was that from a Mau Mau point of view Nairobi and Kiambu were one. In other words, the clues to what happened in Kiambu were usually to be found in Nairobi, and much of what happened in Nairobi stemmed from decisions taken in Kiambu.

I tried to tell Ken what John Holmes had told us about the Militant Wing gangs living in the forests supported by Passive Wing Committees spread around the Reserve. I wanted him to fit the details for Kiambu into that framework because I understood it and had thought about it. Un-

fortunately the system did not fit. There were no proper gangs living in the area because the Mau Mau did not need them or want them there. Together Nairobi and Kiambu formed the political centre of the movement and the main administrative base. It was in the interest of the Mau Mau to keep the area quiet so as to avoid the attentions of the Security Forces as far as possible, and thereby to ensure that political and administrative activities could continue unhampered.

In case I should feel that there was any shortage of Mau Mau in the District Ken ran quickly over their formidable organization. There was a committee for each of the three divisions of Gatundu, Githunguri and Chura. Subordinate to them were committees for each location and sub-location of the Reserve and committees in all the main centres in the Settled Area: a veritable network. Each of these committees collected money, arms, ammunition and supplies, in the same way as did the committees in the other districts. The difference lay in the fact that the money or articles collected did not go to supporting Kiambu gangs because there weren't any. Instead they were used to support the movement as a whole. Ken considered that not only was this process vital to the well-being of the gangs in the forests elsewhere, but also that the political activities of the Mau Mau movement were financed from money collected in the Nairobi-Kiambu base. He went so far as to say that if we could crack Mau Mau in Kiambu and Nairobi the whole rebellion would collapse.

I suppose I must have looked disappointed at hearing about the non-warlike temperament of our foes because Goodale added that strong gangs from the Aberdares often entered the District, and that quite large parties of recruits passed through on their way to the forest from Nairobi almost every week.

The last subject for discussion was the organization which I should command. I knew from John Holmes that I was meant to have a Field Intelligence Assistant (F.I.A.) for each division and that he should be a full time member of the Kenya Regiment. Goodale told me that there was only one Kenya Regiment sergeant who worked at District Headquarters, but he had just got married and gone on leave. In addition there was a part-time member of the Kenya Police Reserve (K.P.R.) at Tigoni, the Divisional Headquarters of Chura, and another K.P.R. officer at a police station called Kikuyu in the extreme south of the District. He was called Roger Barnes and he worked overtime.

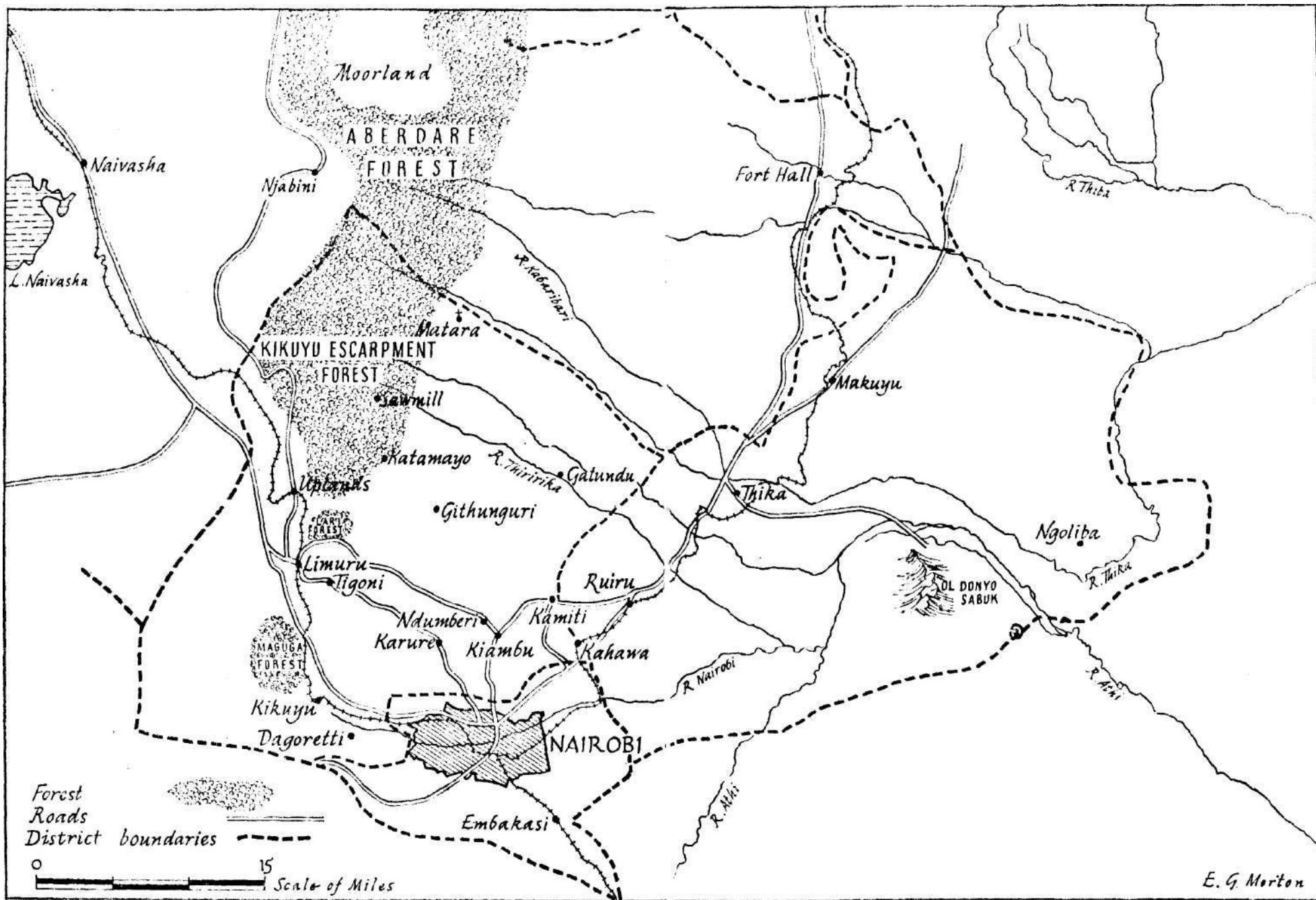
Soon after I arrived, the District seemed to liven up a bit and within the first two weeks our forces sighted and chased several small gangs. Despite my efforts, however, I never managed to get involved in an action.

During these very early days most of the activity seemed to be in the north of Chura division and I spent a lot of time in and around Uplands police station. This was lucky for me because the officer in charge was a very special sort of police inspector called Philip Myburgh. Though a genuine Kenya man, his father had been a regular soldier and his brother was at Sandhurst at the time, so I had rather more in common with him than with the normal second generation Kenya men who held many of the important 'field' jobs in the police, officered the Kikuyu Guard and provided all the F.I.A.s. It takes a long time to get accepted by such people as being of any use whatsoever: they are naturally suspicious of people like me from the Welfare State. Philip Myburgh helped me a tremendous lot by taking me into his confidence from the start and introducing me to his fellow Kenyans.

The second in command at Uplands was also an unusual man in a different way. Dennis Kearney was able to talk Kikuyu as well as Swahili—a very rare accomplishment. He was a member of the Kenya Regiment on loan to the police. His chief characteristic, other than his enthusiasm for slaughtering Mau Mau, was his liking for practical jokes. I was easy meat; at that time Dennis looked so young and angelic that I was always caught off guard. Later he got stout from walking around the jungle and drinking beer so his innocent look wore off.

Although I much enjoyed talking with Myburgh and Kearney, there was an even more compelling reason for my frequent visits to Uplands. Near the police station lived a settler who knew the Kikuyu rather better than they knew themselves. He had been born in the country and his father, who was still alive, had been one of the first white men to settle in Kenya. This man, though no longer young, was completely dedicated to the task of defeating Mau Mau. His name was Kitchener-Morson. He was short and sturdy with dark hair and a weather-beaten face. He was officially in the K.P.R. but he took no notice of that. He worked hand in glove with the District Officer for Chura and based himself at Uplands. His main power lay in finding out what was going on and as such he was one of the men I could see with advantage almost every day.

As the days went by I heard more and more about gangs appearing but never managed to get involved myself. After three weeks I was desperate. Then one morning when I came into the office I heard from Ken Goodale that the Kikuyu Guard had just contacted a gang in the southern bit of the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest and that an operation involving the Kikuyu Guard and a police mobile squad known as the 'Striking Force' was taking place.



E. G. Morton

I did not wait for him to finish, though I did hear that one terrorist had already been killed. I jumped into my Land-Rover and drove as fast as I could to Uplands. The roads in the Reserve are all made of a red soil called murrain and as I tore over them a cloud of dust puffed up around me and settled over the Land-Rover and everything in it. I arrived at Uplands police station forty minutes later looking like a Red Indian, only to find that everyone had already gone to the operation.

The best plan seemed to be to drive towards the forest and soon I was bumping along a track lined with Kikuyu Guard. Every now and then I leant out of the Land-Rover and shouted 'Wapi Bwana' which means 'Where is the white man', or something of that sort. These were the only two words of Swahili I knew so I could not understand the answers, and merely drove on in the direction in which most of the men pointed. I drove around in a frenzy of impatience for some time and then came up with the District Officer standing by his van which was stopped in the track. I knew John Cumber a long way off, by his vast size, and before reaching him I had recognized two or three of the people with him. I was glad to see the stocky figure of Kitch' Morson who was talking to the Chief. The officer in charge of the Kikuyu Guard and the Chief Inspector commanding the police in Chura division were also present.

John Cumber quickly told me what was going on. The gang were still in the forest and he had surrounded the area with Kikuyu Guard. Meanwhile the police Striking Force had gone in from the east to follow tracks from the place where the Kikuyu Guard had originally made contact with the terrorists. He himself was just off to that area and would take me along if I wanted to come.

We drove fast down a track along the edge of the forest lined by Kikuyu Guard. We gripped our seats as we crashed in and out of potholes or waved our acknowledgement to the Africans who were brandishing their spears or rifles at us in salute. Once we passed a lorry crammed with reinforcements for the cordon and I caught a glimpse of Dennis Kearney crouched over the wheel. Soon afterwards we swung left along a track which cut through the forest and after a time we emerged into the Reserve to the east.

We stopped outside the Katamayo Guard post. It looked like a medieval fort made of mud though there were bamboo spikes instead of water in the moat, and barbed wire on top of the battlements. Inside we found several members of the patrol which had first contacted the gang. They were all in a high state of excitement and told us how they had come on the terrorists by chance at the edge of the river. Most of the gangsters ran

away on seeing the patrol but their leader stopped to throw a grenade. In a flash the guardsmen shot him down—so they said—but the grenade landed amongst them. Luckily in the stress of events the terrorist had forgotten to pull out the pin so it failed to explode.

John Cumber asked about the present situation and we learnt that the Striking Force had gone into the forest to follow the gangster's tracks. They had left an hour and a half earlier. Several of the men volunteered to guide us in their footsteps and we wasted no time in following them. At last, I thought, I would see a gang.

From the Kikuyu Guard post we followed our guides down the side of one of the steep valleys, crossed the river at the bottom and started to climb up the other side. Almost at once the track we were on took a sharp turn and entered the forest. Immediately we passed into deep shade. The track became damp and slippery so that the going was difficult. On either side vast trees disappeared into the sky above us while giant ferns and creepers filled the landscape nearer the ground.

After half an hour we heard firing ahead of us but it was a long way off. All the same I knew that the bullets were not directed at wooden targets and pressed forward convinced that I should soon be able to have a shot myself. Soon after, three Africans appeared walking down the track towards us: a perfect target. Unfortunately they were policemen. These men told us two more terrorists had been killed in the firing we had heard. The commander of the Striking Force had sent them out with the news while he and the rest of his unit continued the pursuit.

John Cumber talked to the men for some time and then to my intense disappointment said that we would have to retrace our steps because there would be no chance of catching up with the terrorists that day.

We drove around the area for the next few hours but there was no more action. In the evening I returned to Kiambu and was able to give an eye witness's account of events to the District Commissioner, the Superintendent of Police and the Colonel of the K.A.R. battalion. In fact I was busy until well after midnight.

The operations room was at the end of the main government block in Kiambu. Inside were wireless sets for communication with the police stations of the District, and with police headquarters in Nairobi. The walls were covered with maps and charts and the place was run by lady members of the K.P.R., though at night a man was on duty.

In the next few weeks I drove like mad in my new police Land-Rover from one part of the District to another. I made flying visits to Thika and to the Army Headquarters in Nairobi. I accompanied Goodale when he

went to see his informers though I was never allowed to see them face to face. Now and then I would meet Ian Feild at some convenient spot on the boundary of Kiambu and Fort Hall, and we would talk and possibly exchange a prisoner for interrogation purposes to our mutual advantage.

My existence was extremely tiring but I liked it because I was learning something every day. I had got to the state that visiting politicians and journalists reach after being in the country for three weeks, that is to say I thought I really knew what was going on. My confidence was only slightly upset when I brought back a report of a gang from one of my 'friends' (Dennis Kearney) and started talking to Goodale about it. I was filing the leader's name under 'S' and I asked Ken if he had ever heard of him before. The name I had been given was Joseph Sabuni. Ken explained gently that Joseph could be abbreviated to Joe and that Sabuni was the Swahili word for soap.

One day soon after this incident I sat down to work out what it was I was supposed to be doing as the District Military Intelligence Officer for Kiambu and Thika. I was surprised to find myself unable to make any sense out of the problem. Then I remembered that the army teaches one to do what is called an 'Appreciation' when in doubt as to how to carry on. I had always regarded this process as being similar to the intellectual contortions practised by eastern ascetics but in my extremity I resolved to try it.

The first thing in making an appreciation is to decide on the aim. I spent a long time in working out what exactly I had come to Kenya to do. I knew that Special Branch as a whole was charged with the task of getting the information needed on all matters connected with the security of the Colony; this was a vast commitment embracing all sorts of subjects. I knew too that Military Intelligence Officers (M.I.O.s) were part of Special Branch, so presumably their job was to carry out some part of the commitment. I also deduced that the part concerned was the part that had arisen as a result of the rebellion, i.e. obtaining information about Mau Mau. Lastly, I knew that my area was the Districts of Kiambu and Thika. I ultimately decided to define my aim as being: 'To provide the Security Forces with the information they needed to destroy Mau Mau in Kiambu and Thika Districts'. I wrote it on a piece of paper and put it by my bed.

The next job was to consider the main factors affecting the way in which I could achieve the aim. The first one to strike me was that virtually no information was coming in to Special Branch on the subject of Mau Mau. I should therefore achieve nothing by settling down in the office as



The house at Kamiti



View from the house

a staff officer selecting and passing on information which we had not got. Instead I should have to get hold of the information myself.

The second was that I had no idea of how to get information because I had no training on the subject and knew no language other than English. This was a sobering fact which led me to decide that my only logical course was to organize other people to collect information for me.

The last devastating thought I had was that I only had one part-time K.P.R. officer, one full-time K.P.R. officer, and a recently married sergeant of the Kenya Regiment to do the collecting for me. They could obviously pick up only a small proportion of the information I wanted. As a result I decided that I should have to collect information from every single person who came on it. Soldiers, policemen, district officers, Kikuyu Guard officers and the C.I.D. all had some. Until I had a larger organization of my own I would have to get it from them. The only way to do this was by visiting them often and making friends with them.

My plan therefore was to go round and round my Districts seeing as many people as possible as often as possible. In order to make them well-disposed towards me I would be useful to them, in any way I could. For example, I could carry messages between District Headquarters and the Divisions, or I could bring back first-hand reports to help the District Commissioner and the Police Superintendent get an accurate idea of events. I could collect prisoners in my car and bring them back for interrogation. Or I could talk to people in the field who would be glad to have the chance of stating their views to someone who could repeat them to the right people in District Headquarters. Gradually I hoped to be able to stand back from day-to-day events, but that could not be until I had got many more F.I.A.s. Meanwhile I would have to keep on the move and make up for shortage of staff by my own activity. I decided to reduce time taken in sleeping and eating to a minimum and start on my new plan next day.

I had not been working my plan for more than a few days before I realized that I could not continue to live with the army in Kiambu. My hosts were very kind and helpful but my hours were too irregular. Often I wanted dinner at three in the morning or breakfast at midday. It was obvious that I needed a house of my own so I looked round and eventually found a suitable one which I rented from a coffee farmer for fifteen pounds per month.

The house was near the village of Kamiti, in a most convenient place. It was in the Settled Area but on the edge of the Reserve. It was also on the border between Thika and Kiambu Districts. From Kamiti roads ran



Kiambu police  
headquarters



Eric Holyoak

to Thika, Kiambu and Nairobi, so I could hardly have found a better spot. The house was old by Kenya standards. It was made of mud and wattle with a thatched roof. It had only one floor and the building was one room wide. There was a bedroom at each end and an entrance hall in the middle in which were kept knives, forks, spoons, crockery and food. To the right of the hall and between it and one bedroom was a bathroom. To the left of the hall and next to the other bedroom was the dining room and sitting room. Behind the house was a hut in which the cooking was done and another hut for the cook. Behind that again was a long shed containing three rooms in which lived the house boy, garden boy and any visitors.

There was a supply of water in the form of a large tank which was filled from the river by a pump. There was a smaller tank which caught water from the roof for drinking and there was an oil drum cemented onto some bricks which provided a boiler for the bath. There was no electricity of course, but I took on three pressure lamps with the house, two of which worked. There was also a cook, a house boy, and the house was fully furnished. At the time I moved in I thought I had rented a mansion, though later on I often wished that the roof kept out the rain and that the water pump was more reliable.

The cook and the house boy were Kikuyu and both owned land in the Reserve which their wives farmed in traditional style. In common with lots of Kikuyu men these two had not been content with watching their wives labour and had taken work in the Settled Area to supplement their incomes. Whether they were Mau Mau or not I naturally did not know, but like most Europeans I banked on the fact that loyalty or self-interest would prevent them from murdering me or letting others do so. And like most—though not all—Europeans I was lucky in this respect.

A major difficulty was that I could not talk to either the cook or the house boy because I knew no Swahili, let alone Kikuyu. In Kenya each tribe has its own language which few people outside that particular tribe know. In addition everyone talks Swahili which is the language used for communication between tribes and races. Luckily the army had provided me with an Asian called Mahomet whose job was to drive and look after my Land-Rover. He spoke English and Swahili after a fashion so that through him I was just able to make contact with my staff. Mahomet lived in the shed behind the cook's hut and went everywhere with me.

I moved into my house on September 27th, exactly one month after arriving in Kenya. For the first time in my life I was in my own establishment and free from the cramping atmosphere of family, school or army. To start with I was nervous of being visited by the Mau Mau, and I

visualized a gang coming in with the soup in best Hollywood fashion. In fact, there was little to stop them because in one or two places the wall of the house was wire netting and half the bolts were missing from doors and windows—the staff had probably sold them to gangs who would use them in the manufacture of home-made guns. After a week without an incident the feeling wore off and apart from keeping my pistol handy I stopped thinking about the Mau Mau in such a personal way.

A few days after moving into my house I received my first real taste of unpleasantness. One evening, Ken Goodale and I went off to have dinner with Kitch' Morson who had by this time become an honorary F.I.A. which meant that he did all the work but got no pay for it. On the way back Ken suddenly said that he wanted to have a quick look in the Tigoni mortuary because he was missing an informer who might have found his way in there. Would I please come along and hold the torch?

From the outside the mortuary looked inoffensive, so I was not prepared for what I saw when we opened the door. The shambles inside was past all describing. There had been a number of actions recently and altogether there must have been eighteen bodies in a place the size of a small summer house. Normally in Kenya everyone is buried on the day they die but this had not been possible due to the need of identification and inquests. Some of them had been there for five days and were partially decomposed. They were all lying around tangled up on the floor as there were no slabs in the Tigoni charnel house.

As I slowly took in the mess I was all for making off, but Ken behaved as though nothing was wrong: he even continued talking about whatever it was we had been discussing before we got there, as he rummaged around in the human wreckage. After a few moments while I looked out through the door I forced myself to look back inside again. In a surprisingly short time I found that I was no longer bothered by the sight. But for the smell, I might even have been looking at a lot of old bicycles lying on the ground.

Later on I thought over this incident again. Hitherto I had not seen any of the nasty side of Mau Mau though I knew it existed. I had been hoping that I should be broken in slowly, and I was rather nervous of the effect which a really gruesome scene would have on me. Now I had seen something more revolting than I could have imagined—even the cinema could not have produced such a spectacle—and I had found that I hardly minded at all. From that time on I felt more sure of myself.

The next few weeks after my move were a time of intense activity. Ken Goodale had got together quite a lot of detailed information about

one of the big committees, and we spent many hours rounding up the members and hunting down the Strong Arm Group who enforced their laws. One of the committee members turned out to be a Christian parson, and we even found the minutes of a meeting which started with prayers and continued with a discussion as to how much should be paid to people who murdered policemen!

At this period, and indeed throughout my entire stay in Kenya, the writing of my weekly report occupied a lot of time. On several occasions, when I was new to the job, I spent a whole night in the office working on it, only returning to my house in time for breakfast. We may not have discovered much but what we did know was all going down on paper in case anyone could be found who wanted to read it.

As time went on I noticed that the work came in bursts. For several days running I would get virtually no sleep and then there would be two or three days during which I would lead a normal existence, or something very like it. To start with, the active periods were more common but during October I collected two more F.I.A.s and this enabled me to stand back from events a little. It was an important step forward because hitherto I had been careering round the District like a fresh-run salmon with a hook in its mouth.

Towards the end of October Ken Goodale left Kiambu for six months' leave in England. This was a great blow to me because he was one of the very best of the younger Special Branch officers, and I was learning a lot from him. I was, however, fortunate in his successor, Peter Dempster, who was younger even than Ken; in fact he was probably the youngest Assistant Superintendent in the Kenya Police. We soon discovered that we had been at the same school and furthermore we shared a number of interests such as steeplechasing and fishing.

Racing and fishing seemed pretty remote from my hectic way of life but as things settled down I did manage to get away once in a while. During October I had two days off and on both occasions I made expeditions up to the forest edge and fished in the Katamayo River. I was not very successful but I caught a few trout and greatly enjoyed myself. It seemed a pity that the natural brown trout had died out due to stocking with rainbow. Admittedly the rainbow trout fought well but it was almost impossible to catch them on a dry fly. The best results came from fishing wet with a large Coachman.

Sometimes if all was quiet on a Sunday morning I would go to church. There was a parson at Kiambu who used to take Morning Service there once a fortnight, and this provided a link with the life I had lived before

coming to Kenya. In addition it gave me an hour of complete peace which was at variance with the frantic rush of the rest of my life, and I liked seeing respectable looking coffee farmers with their wives and daughters wearing civilized clothes. Sometimes the parson gave a good sermon within an acceptable time.

As October turned into November the look of the country changed. Bright blue blooms covered the jacaranda trees. The dry grass became green again and the roses in front of my house flowered. Watching the Kenya equivalent of spring I had the feeling that I was reaching the end of the first lap and that I should soon move on and see things in a deeper perspective.

Before leaving England I had had a blurred but balanced view of the situation in Kenya as a whole. I had been in the position of a person who sees a vast landscape painting at the end of a dimly lit corridor. Some of the picture had appeared to be sinister and frightening but I had seen enough to make me want to look more closely at the detail.

During my first two months I had walked right up to the picture and shone a bright light on one corner of it. I saw clearly the detail of that part of the canvas: it depicted the European community, the Security Forces and the machinery of the Government. All this was very interesting but in shining my light on this part of the picture I had cast a shadow over the rest. I knew no more about the Africans, their ways and customs, than I had learnt in England. Perhaps I knew less because the knowledge I had acquired there was slipping out of my mind. I knew no more about the way in which Africans think, nor had I learnt what it was that they sought after in their hearts. It was this kind of knowledge that would give me an understanding of the Mau Mau movement and only by getting such understanding could I hope to achieve my aim.

It was evidently time for me to move my light and illuminate more of the picture.



*Chapter Three*

## TROUBLE

**T**

I HAD hoped that during November I should be able to build up the number of F.I.A.s working in my area, but I was doomed to disappointment. Early in the month the sergeant who worked for me in Thika took French leave and got shot in an accident. Soon afterwards the Kiambu F.I.A. who had been away on his honeymoon when I arrived, developed a duodenal ulcer and had to go to hospital. To cap it all the Minister of Labour decided that my only other Kenya Regiment sergeant would be better employed elsewhere. I was back where I started with the two K.P.R. officers and Kitch' Morson, still honorary, but as active as ever.

I heard nothing about reinforcements until one day John Holmes rang me up and told me to go to Kenya Regiment H.Q. in Nairobi and collect a replacement for one of the men I had lost. John said that the man concerned would probably make a good interrogator though he was a bit young to send out to a Division as an F.I.A.

Later in the day I went to the barracks of the Kenya Regiment. As I drove along the road in front of the long white building I saw a batch of soldiers being drilled in the square. They looked very smart in clean khaki drill uniforms. I recognised one of the N.C.O.s who was drilling them as being a man I had served with before in Germany. Mahomet took me to the main entrance but could not stop there because a battered black Skoda van had settled itself down comfortably in front of the steps.

I jumped out a few yards further on, and went in to see the adjutant

who was an old acquaintance. He was playing French cricket in his office with the Colonel and I collected a stinging 'off drive' in my face as I opened the door. After a short gossip I asked for my new recruit and was introduced to Sergeant Eric Holyoak.

At first sight he looked like a schoolboy who had grown upwards too fast for the rest of him to catch up. He was all arms and legs and neck with a pointed sort of face and fair hair, which looked as though it hadn't been brushed for a year or more. He seemed absurdly young to be a sergeant, and indeed he was only just nineteen. I said I hoped he would stay longer than his predecessors, to which he replied that he thought he would have to, because his car wouldn't do more than one more journey. I then realized that I had taken on an old black Skoda van as well as a sergeant.

Holyoak's predecessor had lived in the sergeant's mess of the K.A.R. battalion in Kiambu, but that had been inconvenient for both of us. I had decided, therefore, that Holyoak should stay at Kamiti until something else could be arranged. As we stopped in front of the house a grinding noise came from the Skoda's back axle which seemed to indicate reluctance for further travel. Nyoike the house boy came to help with the bags and as he and Eric Holyoak disappeared into the end bedroom I had the feeling that at last I had a man who would stay for a while.

Life became much easier once Holyoak settled in. It was a great help to have somebody around who could tell the house staff what to do. My previous contact with them had been pretty chancey because I relied on Mahomet as a translator and we could hardly understand each other. We soon started having different food at meals: hitherto it had been steak and pineapple for lunch and supper every day, with eggs for breakfast. On one occasion Nganga the cook was arrested because his pass was out of date. Eric retrieved him. Soon afterwards Mahomet found himself in court for recklessly driving my Land-Rover into a settler's car. Through Eric I was able to instruct him how to conduct himself, as a result of which he was let off with a very light fine. Unfortunately Mahomet was loth to leave well alone and started bargaining with the magistrate to cut the fine by half because of the masses of wives and children he had to support. Luckily both the prosecutor and the magistrate saw the funny side, and I was allowed to bustle him out of court.

Such interludes were doubtless amusing, but the general situation in my two Districts during November and December was far from funny. Indications of a change from the non-violence policy in Kiambu had started coming in during October, when two headmen on European estates near Kiambu had been hacked to pieces. During November the

incident chart in the operations room showed a steady rise. Usually the reports would be of a gang often or twenty breaking into some African's hut at night and killing him. On one occasion two tribal policemen were murdered and their rifles stolen. We, in Special Branch, put it down to Strong Arm groups attached to committees or possibly marauding gangs from Nairobi. Towards the end of November we had a taste of something more serious. It so happened that on the day in question I had gone first to Thika rather than Kiambu. As usual on my arrival I had called at the operations room to see the situations reports, and as soon as I poked my head round the door I could tell that something was wrong. Instead of one or two lady members of the K.P.R. sitting quietly at their desks I found the room full of men. The superintendent of Police was himself at the wireless set and various members of his staff were looking at maps and writing out messages. John Thody the District Special Branch officer was in the room so I asked him what was going on. He told me that a large gang was being engaged on the borders of the District and Fort Hall. No one seemed to know what was happening, the walky-talky wireless station with the police mobile squad had not been heard, and altogether there seemed to be a certain amount of doubt as to the position. I decided that it was a perfect opportunity for me to be useful so I returned to my Land-Rover and hurried off to the scene of action.

From the talk in the operations room I knew roughly in what area the gang had last been seen, so I drove there as fast as possible. Being on the Thika side of the border I was travelling down a road between coffee farms. On either side stretched row after row of green bushes six or eight feet tall. Every now and then a drive would fork off from the main road and lead up to a farm house or African labour lines. As I got nearer to the place where the gang had been seen, I found little pickets of K.P.R. on the corners and in places overlooking valleys and turnings. I stopped to ask them what was going on but they didn't know much more than that they were supposed to prevent the gang crossing the road. It was obvious that an area of coffee was being cordoned and presumably someone was inside trying to flush the gang.

Further on I found a man who told me that some soldiers had arrived and were inside the cordon. This man had also heard that a K.P.R. officer had been killed but he knew no details. Following the trail I met a doctor who had also heard that there was a casualty and together we pushed on. We soon found that the rumour was all too true when we passed down a track through a coffee plantation and came on a car with the body of a K.P.R. officer at the wheel. I recognized the man as a Mr Lyall Shaw whom

I had met on the Thika District Emergency Committee of which he was an unofficial member.

Lyall Shaw had evidently spotted the gang when they first appeared on his land. He had rung up the operations room stating roughly where they were and had then set off in his estate car to trail them, until further forces could arrive. In the thick coffee he must have got too close, and the gang had seized their opportunity to ambush him and had then shot him at close range. This was a sad business, but as gallant an end as anyone could wish for.

After seeing all I could, I went back to Thika and gave the people there a first hand account of what was going on. The operation continued all day, but in spite of every effort on the part of the K.P.R., police, and some soldiers of the Black Watch, the gang escaped into Fort Hall. The trouble was that we just had not got the information on which to deploy our forces properly and the area was too big for a chance contact to be anything more than a lucky coincidence.

That night I stayed at Thika trying to piece together the events of the day. In the evening I got a message from Ian Feild in Fort Hall to say that he had also spent the day chasing a gang and that from prisoners taken he thought it consisted of recruits from Nairobi on their way to the Forest. Next morning I remained in Thika but in the afternoon I heard that another large gang had been brought to action in Kiambu not far from my house.

I raced back as fast as I could but by the time I arrived the gang had split up and escaped, though our forces had succeeded in killing ten of them and capturing some others. That evening Peter Dempster and I settled down to interrogate the prisoners, but with no background information to work on we had little chance of getting anything useful. Strangely enough we did make some headway because a prisoner inadvertently identified one of the others as the gang leader. This man, thinking that it was no use trying to hide his rank and importance decided to go the whole hog and claimed to be a senior general. From then on Peter Dempster and I concentrated on him and by midnight we had got the story fairly clear. Apparently this leader had come from the Nyeri Forest early in the month and had collected a large gang of recruits in Nairobi. He had then sent one half of his force off under his second-in-command three days ago. These were the people who had been involved in the Thika action. Later he had left with the other half, about seventy men, and as we knew, had been contacted near Kamiti. I drove straight to Thika to tell everyone there the news, and also spoke by wireless to Ian Feild in Fort Hall.

At about three o'clock in the morning I left Thika to drive back to my house. There had been a heavy shower of rain and flying ants were thick in the air. Suddenly right ahead in the middle of the road was a giraffe. The brakes were just good enough to prevent a nasty accident and then I wondered if I had imagined the animal. I had had virtually no sleep for the last few days and was worried to think I might be having hallucinations. I jumped out of the car and looked back. To my great relief I saw the odd looking beast flowing off through the sisal. Though I travelled up and down that road day and night for the next two years, I never saw another giraffe in that part of the country.

For the next few days we settled down to our prisoner and he certainly had the most thorough interrogation of any terrorist I have ever met. After a time we handed him over to other Special Branch officers and in the end nearly everyone in Nairobi Area had had a talk with him. Once he decided to speak, nothing could stop him. He came out with the most intimate details of all the Aberdare leaders and he evidently knew something about it as he was able to hoodwink a lot of people. Gradually the passage of time proved that he had been leading us—and mainly me—up the garden path. For his co-operative attitude he was given a lighter sentence than he deserved. Retrospectively, I take off my hat to him. Good luck to ex-General Nderitu Mugambo whoever he really was.

There was a quiet period of two or three days after these actions but it did not last long. As Christmas got nearer the pace hotted up, though we didn't have another contact with a worthwhile gang for some weeks. The incidents were mostly of a minor nature such as one that occurred in the middle of December.

On this occasion there was a large cocktail party in the Settlers' Club just outside Kiambu. These events were not common and people from all over the local Settled Area had flocked in to attend. Most of those present were coffee farmers who were living with their families on isolated estates round the edge of the Native Reserve. It was easy enough to tell that they were living under a shadow from the uproarious way in which they were enjoying their evening out. A few were a bit drunk perhaps but the majority were just relaxing from the tension. I did not stay late because I wanted to make up for lost sleep, so I went back to Kamiti soon after eight o'clock.

As I was driving the last few yards up to my house I heard a burst of firing from another house about half a mile away, which belonged to an elderly couple. As it happened, I knew that the man was away in Nairobi for the evening. Eric Holyoak had also heard the shots and had come

running out of his room. Together we drove round as fast as possible.

We arrived at about the same moment as some other neighbours. The sight that greeted us was appalling. The windows were broken, the door knocked down and bits of clothing and other oddments littered the yard. After a moment we summoned enough courage to go inside. The lights were all out but the beam of Eric's torch revealed a more frightful shambles even than had appeared outside. We all knew what it would be like to find the old woman. Often enough we had seen pictures of similar scenes taken by daylight next morning. As a result I hoped that it would not be I who came across the corpse. I was horrified to think that I might at any moment put my hand on it when turning up a chair or be the first to see some bleeding remnant picked out by the torchlight moving from side to side of one room after another.

In this way we passed through the dining room and the living room and had just started our search of a bedroom when we heard a faintly apologetic little voice calling out from the room through which we had just come. We went back and made our identity known but still we could see nothing. After a moment or two there was more of the little voice and then the gallant old lady appeared from under the floor. She had apparently taken the precaution of loosening some of the boards and as the gangsters hacked down the door she had disappeared under the floor. She turned out to be quite unharmed and hardly troubled by the affair. In fact her friends had difficulty in persuading her to go home with them for the night.

A far more serious situation developed shortly afterwards on Christmas Eve. This time I had gone to Nairobi to have dinner with General Erskine's A.D.C. and for the first time since arriving in the Colony I had put on my dinner jacket. I intended to have a civilized and pleasant evening, but we had hardly started on the soup before the telephone rang and a message was passed to the Chief of Staff that a gang had been contacted near Thika and that the commander of the patrol which had found them had been killed. No sooner had the receiver been replaced than the telephone rang again. It was Eric Holyoak telling me to come at once.

I raced back to Kiambu, picked up Eric, and went to the scene of the action. By this time it was dark but we found the spot easily enough because it was on the main Nairobi road about three miles south of Thika, and the whole place was a mass of cars and people. It took us a few minutes to work out what was happening. Slowly the chaos sorted itself out and we understood that the gang was in a triangular patch of thick bush surrounded on one side by the railway embankment on another side by the main Nairobi Road and on the third side by the track on which we

were standing. The whole area was not more than about three hundred yards long and two hundred wide at the base.

We learnt that the gang had first been reported in the afternoon and that a patrol of the Black Watch together with a police mobile squad, had set off to chase it. The Black Watch company commander had decided to lead the patrol himself and his second in command came with him. Apparently they had picked up tracks of the gang fairly quickly and had followed them up a shallow valley to the area in which we were now standing. Then quite unexpectedly there had been a shot and the company commander had dropped dead with a bullet through him. For the next few minutes business must have been brisk as two more of the patrol, this time policemen, were wounded. The second-in-command then took over but decided not to assault the enemy because he felt that to do so in the long grass and thick bush would result in further casualties. He also appreciated that it would be easy to surround the enemy by putting a cordon on the railway, the road and the path. Once in position he felt—with good reason—that the enemy would have to surrender.

By the time we arrived the cordon was in place but it had taken rather longer to organize than was at first hoped. Meanwhile the day had gone. The cordon was made up mainly of K.P.R. officers who had flocked in on hearing of the need for their services. There were, in addition, some policemen from Thika and most of the Black Watch company. The command of the operation had devolved onto the District Commandant of the K.P.R., Peter Deane, who normally controlled any combined operations in the area because he was a natural leader and by far the best man to do so.

By this time it did not look as though the gang had much intention of surrendering, so the District Commandant decided to get a drum of petrol from Thika and pour it into the bush from the railway embankment. It was hoped that by setting the scrub on fire the terrorists would be forced into the open. They could then be shot down by the light of mortar flares. The petrol took some time to arrive and to make sure that the particular bit of bush was properly marked, Peter Deane drove his car over the edge of the track into the long grass so that its lights should mark the spot. Although he drove to within thirty yards of the gang he got back to the shelter of the cordon unscathed.

Soon after Eric and I appeared on the scene, the petrol arrived. We were on the path on one side of the triangle with Peter Deane and the petrol opposite us on the railway embankment. As it was poured down the hill someone in the cordon heard the terrorists move and fired a few

rounds at the spot. This was the signal for the soldiers to put up their flares, and for thirty seconds we saw, for the first time, the whole area laid out before us. While the flare was alight distances shrunk to normal and we all seemed close together. The railway embankment opposite appeared to be only a few yards away and the men on it were easily recognizable. When the flare faded the people on the far side of the arena receded until the embankment itself was only faintly visible in the dark. Then another flare would go up and everyone would seem close together again.

I should think that two or three flares burned out without showing any sign of the gang. Then, as another one burst into light, a number of shots were fired at the cordon from long grass. I think one or two of the terrorists fired in our direction because I heard the crack of bullets passing over not very far away. Undoubtedly most of the gangsters aimed at the group clustered round the petrol drum, nicely silhouetted against the sky on top of the railway embankment. For the next quarter of a minute until the flare burnt out, they fired as fast as they could into this group which was not more than thirty or forty yards from them. Meanwhile the men in the cordon shot back into the area in which the gangsters lay. Unfortunately we were firing at an area and they were firing at clearly defined targets. By the time that darkness returned four members of the cordon had fallen.

As soon as the firing stopped, Eric and I ran across to the other side to help with the casualties. One African policeman was dead and another was badly wounded. The Assistant Commandant of the K.P.R. had also been hit in the arm and the leg, but worse still, Peter Deane was shot through the stomach. We helped to carry the wounded out to an ambulance on the track. Later we heard that the African constable and the Assistant Commandant recovered, but Peter Deane died. Thika was to feel his loss severely in the next few months.

As the ambulance drove away there was a heavy shower of rain and for the next half hour very little happened. The night was absolutely black and no one was anxious to try more flares, unless the gang was obviously in the open. Meanwhile a new company commander had arrived from Nairobi to take over the Black Watch contingent, and with the departure of Peter Deane he found himself commanding the operation as well.

At about this time I drove in to Thika to see how things were going elsewhere. The Superintendent of Police was running affairs in the operations room because there had been reports of two other gangs in the neighbourhood and he was the man to decide where to send the small detachment of police who were all that remained as an operational reserve.

Poor man, he had only just come to the District and this was his first major experience of directing operations. I could just imagine what his problems were like. He was responsible for the events of the night because the District Commissioner was away and the other member of the District Emergency Committee—the military commander—had been dead for several hours. Furthermore, I remembered having seen him standing in the group round the petrol drum at the time when the shooting had taken place, so he must have had a good shaking up himself.

We discussed the question of using the reserve on the cordon, and the superintendent eventually decided that it was too risky. Instead I got on the wireless to Kiambu and spoke to Mr Swann, the District Commissioner, asking whether he had any forces he could lend us to strengthen the ring. Luckily he had been keeping in touch with events in Thika during the evening and had evidently worked out the various risks attached to weakening his own insecure position at Kiambu. After a short pause in which he probably discussed the matter with his military commander he came up to say that we could have one company of the K. A.R. I said I would meet them at a certain road junction, and despite a long trip over slippery roads they arrived about two hours later.

Once these extra men had taken their place in the cordon we felt more certain of holding the gang. We had hitherto been frightened that they might slip through a gap and escape. By two o'clock the rain had stopped and we decided to try another drum of petrol. But once again it failed to get the bush blazing properly. In the end the new company commander reluctantly abandoned any further attempt at offensive action and laid down that all efforts should be devoted to holding the gang until it was light enough to kill them with certainty.

After this, time passed very slowly. There was nothing to do except listen for the slightest sound of movement. The soldiers and the K.P.R. were very alert but some of the African policemen, who had been out from the start, showed signs of falling asleep. Later still the sky clouded over and more rain fell.

Suddenly in the silence of the night two shots were fired about fifty yards from where Eric and I were sitting on the bonnet of our Land-Rover. Then there was silence for a few moments except for slight sounds of movement, after which there was a lot more firing. It was some time before we discovered what had happened, but eventually we heard that the gang had crept up to the cordon, selected a place where the men seemed least alert, shot two policemen and raced through the gap. We went to the spot and had a look. From tracks we could see that the gang

had gone. All we had to show for it was one more policeman dead and one more wounded.

Christmas day dawned wet and grey at about a quarter to six. The first person I saw was Eric which was hardly a surprise since we were once more sitting together on our Land-Rover. His khaki trousers and shirt were wet and crumpled and his fair hair was even more tangled than usual. Altogether he looked a terrible ruin and I could not imagine what he was laughing about until I remembered that I was still wearing a dinner jacket and realized that I must look far more of a shambles.

Although we knew that most of the gang had escaped, we still hoped that one or two might have been left behind in the confusion. As soon as the light was good enough the Black Watch did a full scale assault down the valley and Eric and I went with them. As the line moved forward I thought how easy it would be for a terrorist to shoot me at a few yards range if he was prepared to sacrifice his life for the cause. I even thought how tragic it was that a little bit of lead the size of a finger joint could finish a life in less time than it takes to jump out of bed. As the water squelched in my patent leather shoes I hoped no little bits of lead would come my way.

When we were half way down the course there was a rustle in the bushes ahead and a terrorist shot forth as though launched from a catapult. He could only have been twenty yards away when we first saw him, but by the time I had pulled out my pistol he was out of range so I didn't bother to fire. Most of the soldiers had a bang, but he seemed to bear a charmed life, and, amazing to relate he escaped unscathed.

It was soon apparent that I should achieve nothing useful by staying in the area, especially as a lot of people would be waiting to hear what had been going on. We had a full day ahead of us so the sooner we went off and got cleaned up the better.

During the next two days we held a post mortem into what was obviously a serious setback. We had suffered severely in having four men killed and four wounded, especially as our casualties included the military commander for the District and the head of the K.P.R. From examination of the tracks we thought that the gang had been about twenty or thirty strong but we never caught up with it. The leader evidently knew his job and his men had fought well. Months later we discovered that the terrorists came from a Fort Hall gang but at the time we had no information whatsoever, which was the main reason why they had escaped. Certainly this engagement affected us, but it was not nearly so bad for morale as some of our other difficulties.

Perhaps the greatest problem which the Security Forces faced was how to deal with Mau Mau without breaking the law. A full scale civil war was going on around us but the law of the country was still in force and the government was still enforcing it.

The legal code in Kenya in October 1952 was not very different from that in England. Certain acts such as theft or murder were illegal and if you committed them you were prosecuted. When the Emergency started some extra laws were made to fit the special circumstances. For example, it became illegal to administer the Mau Mau oath or to carry arms and certain areas of the forest were placed out of bounds. These extra laws, and there were many of them, were known as Emergency Regulations.

Certain Emergency Regulations dealt with the occasions when you could attack other people. They were complicated but in general terms they meant that the Security Forces could open fire in self defence, or if a terrorist failed to answer a challenge to halt. They were more or less satisfactory for dealing with armed gangsters.

The Security Forces could therefore combat Mau Mau by shooting at them when the occasion demanded. If they captured one in battle or wanted to arrest anyone suspected of being a Mau Mau but who was not actually engaged in an aggressive act, the police had to take the person concerned to court and prove that he had broken one of the laws of the Colony. Furthermore the police had to show proof using the accepted rules of evidence in such a way as to leave no reasonable doubt in the judge's mind that the man had committed the offence.

This was an unusual way of conducting operations and there were one or two snags to it. First of all there were a great number of people waiting trial and the machinery could not cope with them all, even if the evidence had been available.

The next snag was proving that the prisoner had committed the crimes stated. How, for example, could you prove that a certain man had administered an oath without using the evidence of an accomplice. Such evidence by law needs corroboration and is anyhow pretty suspect. Again, witnesses were likely to disappear just before a case because the prisoner's friends either killed them, threatened or bribed them.

Often the evidence against a man came from an informer who had penetrated a Mau Mau committee but who could not possibly be put into the witness box because thereafter he would be useless, if not murdered. Documents were no use as evidence unless a witness could produce them and testify to their validity. This again meant 'blowing' one of our

few agents or giving away the secret of how they had come into the possession of the Security Forces.

Finally the Mau Mau committee members who worked out the policy and who gave the orders for killings, raids, money collection and recruiting seldom did anything against the law themselves. How were we to deal with them? The following story will serve to illustrate the dilemma.

One evening Eric Holyoak contacted a small gang, killing one member of it and capturing two others, one of whom had a rifle. The police charged him with being an armed terrorist, the other was charged with consorting. The defence case for the first man was that he had recently been captured by the gang and had been forced to carry the weapon so as to compromise himself. The judge accepted that view and the man was acquitted. Now if this man was not an armed terrorist, then the other could not have been consorting with an armed terrorist, so he was acquitted too. All this may have been good law but made little sense to Eric who in addition to the action had also spent some time hanging around in Nairobi waiting to give evidence.

There was one other legal means of getting at the Mau Mau. This was for the Police to submit a dossier giving a full list of all that was known against a person to the Governor, who could then sign an order for detention during the Emergency providing he was satisfied that such action was necessary in the interests of maintaining public order. This was a good idea as far as it went but the Governor could only sign a comparatively limited number. Certainly the system could not take care of all the committee members of all the committees though it was satisfactory for the most senior ones. It was an advance in another way, in that it all but recognized the status of prisoner of war by saying to a man 'You are not a criminal but you are on the wrong side. You must be restrained until this trouble is over.' It was of course contrary to the principles of British justice but it was merciful. In its extended form later in the Emergency it saved thousands of loyalist lives by reducing the number of Mau Mau, and probably saved many Mau Mau lives by locking up people who would otherwise have joined the gangs and been killed by the Security Forces.

Apart from normal legal action, detention orders, and actual engagements with armed gangs, there was no other means of dealing with the Mau Mau. Cases occurred of our getting information to the effect that certain people comprised a Mau Mau committee and that they had arranged for someone to be murdered or for a band of recruits to leave for the forest, but we could not lift a finger against them unless they were

important enough to warrant a Governor's Detention Order. The Security Forces certainly had better weapons, better kit, better transport and better command arrangements than the Mau Mau but they had firmly fastened one of their hands behind their back with a cord of legal difficulties,

Now it was just possible to explain this method of working to European police officers or soldiers, and to discipline them so well that they would stand by and watch a known enemy plan some diabolical scheme and then wait calmly for him to do something illegal before moving in to arrest him. But it was often impossible to put this across to the African members of the Security Forces such as the Kikuyu Guard. In the first place they didn't understand about British justice. Their own ideas on the subject were based largely on the theory of compensation and were totally different. They could hardly be expected to sacrifice their safety and that of their families to the purity of British justice which they considered to be idiotic rather than pure.

And so it came about that, once in a way, somebody would take the law into his own hands and strike a blow where one seemed necessary, because the existing legal methods of dealing with the situation were not good enough. Looking back, I am sure that this was wrong. Certainly this sort of conduct saved countless loyalist lives and shortened the Emergency. All the same it was wrong because the good name of Britain was being lost for the sake of saving a few thousand Africans and a few million pounds of the taxpayers' money. Regardless of their popularity, the leaders of the Government and Security Forces stood four square against such practices, which were anyhow very rare.

When, however, certain sections of the press expressed indignation at one or two apparent lapses on the part of authority, the Mau Mau, advised by their legal friends, were quick to realize that they had a powerful weapon within their grasp. By cashing in on the atmosphere which the newspapers had built up they could spread completely false stories about certain people who were particularly effective at frustrating their plans. Thus, if the officer in charge of a certain police station was exceptionally efficient, you could be sure that he would soon find himself the subject of an investigation: he would learn how he had brutally murdered some harmless African whom he claimed to have killed in fair fight. If the F.I. A. was learning too much about the Mau Mau organization in his area, you could be sure he would soon be charged with ill-treating a prisoner whom he had once interrogated. No one was immune from this highly organized form of attack.

The method by which the Mau Mau spread the allegations varied from place to place. Sometimes they would get hold of an Asian lawyer to put forward their case, sometimes, especially in my area, the missionaries were fools enough to believe the tales told to them. Often where farm labour was concerned it would be the settler himself who rushed to the defence of his ill-treated worker. It was sometimes quite funny to see a farmer, well known for his fire-eating attitude towards Africans, come panting up in a rage because of a story told him by one of his men. Nearly all the Europeans in Kenya think the Kikuyu in general are unreliable, but their own cook, coffee picker, chauffeur, church sweeper or whatever it is, is quite perfect. About a year afterwards I was exactly the same myself.

It would be pleasant to be able to say that the Mau Mau made no progress by this form of attack. Unfortunately they did a lot of damage. First and foremost they wasted a fabulous amount of time. For days it would be impossible to get much work done because the people with whom one wanted to deal were busy investigating each other's conduct. Personally I spent a lot of time taking statements from or looking after the interests of the men in my organization who were subject to this form of attack. Occasionally the hue-and-cry would be so great that the victim would have to move to a new area and then there would be a delay while he settled in and discovered what was going on.

This campaign had a very bad effect on morale and at one moment it looked as though there was going to be serious trouble. One or two young police inspectors told me how they had taken the ammunition away from their men and had ordered them to run for it rather than shoot back at any gangs they might contact. No doubt they did not actually do this but a bad feeling existed. No operation can succeed unless the men are really keen to get to grips with the enemy and destroy him utterly. Here we had people talking about running away.

In one way or another things seemed pretty black in Kiambu and Thika during the last days of 1953. It was during these very difficult days that I first began to notice General Hinde. He was officially the Deputy Director of Operations, the Director being of course General Erskine himself. I had no idea as to precisely what General Hinde was supposed to do but it always seemed that he would turn up just when things were going badly and he exerted a steadying influence on affairs. I also began to realize that lots of other people felt the same way about him. The company commanders, the police station commanders, the Kikuyu Guard officers and other people of that sort had all begun to expect General Hinde to appear when they were feeling particularly brownd off, and he very often did.

His visits were quite different from those normally expected of a senior officer. He drove up in his own grey Standard unannounced and unescorted, save by a police askari or two. He came straight to the point and asked questions designed to throw light on whatever he wanted to know and no more. He seldom stayed long and he did not waste time telling people how wonderful they were. All the same, he showed that he was taking an interest, and he gave the impression that he was one of the people engaged on operations and not somebody making a social call. Whenever he came people felt the better for his visit. He was welcome anywhere and any time but he was never more eagerly looked for than in the days when the sky seemed overcast.

**WARUINGI**

FOR a few days after the engagement near Thika there was a slackening in the tempo of Mau Mau inspired operations and I had the opportunity of carrying out some long overdue reorganization within my little force. At last I had received a reasonable number of new F.I.A.s, due to the disbandment of Rayforce, which had put on the market all the Kenya Regiment men previously on loan to the police.

The first of the new F.I.A.s to arrive was John Faull who had been in charge of the police station at Kiamwangi in Gatundu Division. I originally met him on my second day in the District when Goodale was showing me round. Kiamwangi was the first police station I had been inside and John Faull was the first policeman to explain his problems to me at length. "When I arrived he had just finished his daily row with the local missionary who had been complaining about losing his cook. I remember the whole business very clearly, including the cup of tea made, so it seemed, entirely of tinned milk and murrum. Later I had got to know Faull well and when I heard that Rayforce was going to be disbanded I arranged that he should stay in the same general area as F.I.A. Gatundu.

My next addition was Glen Cottar from Wangige police station of Chura division. I had seen a good deal of him in the early days in Kiambu, as the main committee which Ken Goodale used to chase was centred in his area. Glen Cottar was one of those rare people who can get anything done at no cost, with no material, and with no delay. He had a compelling



way with Africans which resulted in their treating him as though he was first cousin to the tribal god. I soon realized that his energy and resourcefulness would be invaluable to us. Unfortunately he didn't get on with the missionaries very well, and from the start they pursued him unmercifully. The trouble was that he did look a bit of a rogue. Eventually they hounded him out but they didn't hound him far and he survived to pull off some astounding successes. Glen Cottar became F.I.A. for Chura.

He was followed by Sergeant Jacky Miller, who had been in command of the police station at Kanjiria in Gatundu. He was slightly unusual in that he had not lived all his life in Kenya but had arrived five years before at the age of sixteen. He was small and had fair hair and vast blue eyes with long lashes. At the time he looked no more than seventeen and he always spoke as though he had left school the day before and couldn't quite decide what all the grown-ups were doing. He seemed so innocent that no one ever suspected that he could harbour an unkind thought, even against the Mau Mau. Unlike Cottar and Faull, Jacky Miller got on splendidly with the missionaries and indeed everyone else. It would never have occurred to me, had I met him just once or twice, that he would have been the least bit of use in the job. Luckily I met him often in my first four months and discovered that underneath there was a relentless man who would not allow anything to get between him and his purpose. I sent Miller to Thika to look after the southern half of that District where the population were primarily Kikuyu from Kiambu District.

The northern half of Thika got Philip Mordaunt. He had previously been in Nyeri District so I knew nothing about him. Like Miller he was unusual, but in a different way. His chief claim to fame lay in the fact that he had been in Kenya all his life. He was as wild as a hawk, and I spent many hours trying to explain to irate policemen or settlers that he had not meant some remark which it would have been impossible to misunderstand. On the credit side he could play the concertina, was a brilliant shot, and would do anything in the world to destroy Mau Mau. It was that last quality which appealed to me so he stayed for the full length of his service and did some wonderful work.

Another F.I.A. called Brown arrived for Githunguri Division. I had not met him before his arrival, and he left after a few months because his health gave out. So I never got to know him as I did the others. All the same he was a great worker and during the short time he was with us he laid the foundations of a good intelligence organization.

In spite of all these increases we suffered one very severe loss. In January Roger Barnes, who more than any other person had kept the southern

half of Kiambu quiet, left. He had worked himself to the bone and run up a terrific record of successes. As a result the Mau Mau had decided to be rid of him at all costs and had touched off an atrocity campaign against him. For weeks he was subject to false accusations from all the crackpots of the area. He continued with his job without bitterness until he was actually suspended from duty while some particularly unpleasant allegation was examined. Naturally there was no case to answer when the matter was investigated, but Roger had had enough. He was not a Kenya man and had been working out of an unselfish desire to help England in the colony. After the treatment he had received he decided to go back to his job in Central Africa and though I tried to dissuade him I could not blame him. It is ironic to note that Roger, who was accused of the most horrific acts, was one of the gentlest of all the men who worked for us. He was an English public-school man and also a sincere Christian. Of all the people in Kenya he was about the least likely to have even considered doing the things alleged against him.

One other slight change occurred in my job. Up to Christmas I had been D.M.I.O. Kiambu, keeping an eye on Thika. The events of the past few weeks had, however, made it quite plain that I was just as much D.M.I.O. of Thika as Kiambu and in January the fact was officially recognized. As I had my spare eye free for some other place John Holmes told me to take on Nairobi as well. This was a very sensible arrangement because virtually everything that happened in Kiambu or Thika had ramifications in Nairobi. Holmes decided that the best way for me to carry out this extra job would be to have one more F.I.A. who could work with the Special Branch in Nairobi, so I got Sergeant Henning.

Bill Henning had previously been in Rayforce in Nyeri and had a lot of experience of the Emergency. He was a bit older than the others—twenty-three—and had more practice as an organizer. He was very fair but had dark eyebrows and brown eyes. I soon discovered a better job for him than liaising with Nairobi.

By the middle of January the lull in Mau Mau activity was over, but when trouble started again, I found myself presiding over a very different organization from what existed a month earlier.

D.M.I.O.: Capt. Kitson  
Interrogator: Sgt. Holyoak

NAIROBI  
Sgt. Henning

KIAMBU DISTRICT  
Honorary: Mr Kitchener-Morson  
Gatundu: Sgt. Faull  
Githunguri: Sgt. Brown  
Chura: Sgt. Cottar

THIKA DISTRICT  
North Thika: Sgt. Mordaunt  
South Thika: Sgt. Miller

On the morning of January 14th I went into the Kiambu operations room and heard that during the night a large gang had come out of the west edge of the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest and attacked a settler's house near Njabini. Although the house itself was in Naivasha District, I decided to go and see what had happened because the gang had obviously come out of my forest and gone back there.

The gang had evidently gone into the assault with great determination and they had done a lot of damage. The reason why they were not entirely successful was that they had chosen the wrong settler to attack. Mr and Mrs Grimwood had hit back hard.

Mr Grimwood met me when I arrived and showed me what had happened. The gang had come out of the forest and split into two parties. One party had destroyed the African labour lines and the other had attacked the house. This group had advanced shouting and blowing whistles. I saw innumerable bullet marks on the house and a scar on the floor of one of the rooms where a hand grenade had exploded. Mr Grimwood, aided by his wife, had moved from window to window firing at the gang until a very brave police inspector came tearing up the drive in his Land-Rover. The gang, not knowing that he was by himself, made off.

After seeing the house I went to the charred remains of the labour lines. There had been no great loss of life because the Grimwoods had organized a safety drill to be carried out by their Africans in case of emergency. Even so, one or two had died, and I noticed a woman who had been hit by a small calibre bullet just above the breast. The gang had later hacked her around in the usual way but there was no hiding the bullet hole.

Having seen all I could, I looked at the bodies of the four terrorists killed by Mr Grimwood during the action and had a talk with one of the Rift Valley Special Branch officers who had come along to investigate, he reckoned that the gang must have been about seventy strong; it had been armed with rifles, stens, a small calibre weapon of some sort, shot-guns and grenades. This much was evident from what I had seen and from empty cases we had found. We were not sure where they had come from, but I knew of no such gang living in Kiambu District.

I drove back along the west edge of the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest. On my way I called at Uplands police station only to find that a gang had been reported in the area of the Katamayo Kikuyu Guard post. There was no responsible person at Uplands so I went off to try and find out what was going on. I was not very lucky in my search, but I gathered that the terrorists had been seen twice by small groups of Kikuyu Guard. On both occasions our forces had been obliged to leave hurriedly. There was

another story about an old goatherd whom the gang had abducted. This man had later escaped and reported that there were eighty well armed terrorists in the gang, but he could not say who they were or what they were doing. After a further abortive search for information I returned to Kiambu to report on the situation.

That evening we sat in the operations room trying to work out what on earth was happening. It was fairly certain that both the gang that had raided the Grimwood's farm and the gang that had abducted the goatherd had come from outside Kiambu. So far as we knew we supported no well-armed gangs of seventy or eighty. The next thing that struck us was that as both gangs seemed to be about eighty strong and as both had been seen within a short distance of each other, they might well be the same. The timings fitted all right, but it was difficult to see why a gang raiding a house in the extreme north of the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest should want to come south to Katamayo.

Having said all I could, I sat around while the District Commissioner, the Superintendent of Police and the military commander decided on the best course to take next day. They were still talking about this when Gatundu came up on the wireless to say that a gang had just attacked and destroyed a nearby Kikuyu Guard post. No details were available. A glance at the map will show the difficulty which faced us in reconciling this attack with the other two incidents, which I personally thought to have been the work of a Fort Hall gang raiding south through the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest. All the same it was just possible for one gang to have been responsible for all three incidents.

Next morning I went up to Gatundu as soon as it was light and looked over the Kikuyu Guard post which we had been told about. I found the report to have been exaggerated as the place was really no more than a Kikuyu Guard social centre, that is to say an ordinary mud hut where tea was sold. I next went to see John Faull who, as F.I. A., should have known what gang had done the job. I was really very vexed when he said he thought it was the work of a local gang. Such a theory did not fit in with my own ideas, either about the gang near Katamayo or about the general situation in the District. With little genuine information on which to work, one has to build up theories, and it is most annoying to have evidence or ideas produced which contradict them.

From Gatundu I went to Thika where I had arranged to meet Ian Feild. We had lunch at the Blue Posts Hotel and I asked him where his various gangs were. I wanted to know if any were missing and I told him that I thought one of them had made a raid deep into Kiambu. Ian did not know

if one of his gangs was out of its usual area. He thought it quite likely that a Fort Hall gang had done the Grimwood job, but he was discouraging about the idea of a raid to Katamayo. Once again I was vexed because his ideas did not fit my theory. I would not have minded if he held to some theory of his own, but both he and Faull thought I was wrong though they did not know what had really happened. I started back from Kiambu fully convinced that some new incident would have occurred somewhere between Gatundu and the Fort Hall border which would support my notion of a gang returning to its own country after a deep raid.

When I did get back to Kiambu I discovered that there had been a further contact near Katamayo. This made nonsense of my ideas, but on the other hand four prisoners had been taken and were waiting in my office for interrogation. Eric and I set to work at once with no background knowledge to help us and only a discredited theory to work on.

Inside my office it was hot and smelly. I sat at my desk, Eric stood by the wall, and one of the prisoners squatted on the floor. The other three prisoners sat together outside, guarded by a police askari. Every time I asked a question through Eric the prisoner said he didn't know. Alternatively he would give an answer that contradicted his previous one. Eric was tired and did not like being an interpreter. He thought I was framing the questions so as to get answers that would fit in with my ideas about what had happened. He soon became 'difficult' which meant that he indulged in passive resistance by translating exactly what I said without using any of his own knowledge to phrase the questions in a way which the Kikuyu would understand.

As a result of Eric's attitude I became stubborn and insisted on taking a detailed statement from each man in turn and trying to break down every case where a prisoner contradicted himself or another prisoner, and this was a laborious job. The prisoners were young and had been chased around for the last few days. They were dirty, sweaty and generally revolting as men often are after receiving a severe fright. None of them wanted to help.

"We continued to interrogate long after it got dark. At about nine o'clock it started to rain hard, the air was full of flying ants and it became very cold. We shut the windows and the atmosphere became unbearable because of the smell of the prisoners and the ever increasing cloud of tobacco smoke. Every time a prisoner came in or went out he would leave red mud from his feet on the wooden floor.

At two o'clock we were still at it. The waste paper basket was crammed with statements which had been proved wrong and re-written. The ash

trays were so full of cigarette ends that every new butt set an old one smouldering, thus adding to the fumes. Our mouths were dry and tasted foul—like an Arab's armpit as Denis Kearney used to say. We could not open the windows because we were still in our shirtsleeves: despite the fog our arms were covered in goose pimples. On top of it all we were very hungry.

Eric had got tired of passive resistance earlier in the evening and I had got tired of saying how the interrogation should be done, so we were working in harmony. I laid down the rough points I wanted to know and Eric organized the method of bringing them out. By three o'clock we were agreed that two of our prisoners were useless, one reasonably cooperative, and one very much the reverse, though capable of being tricked into indiscretion. We decided to leave the two useless ones in Kiambu and take the others back to Kamiti.

It was still pouring with rain and pitch dark as we drove up the track to the house. Eric grabbed the first man and hustled him into the house and I followed. Mahomet and the second man came up behind. Just as I got in through the door there was a yell from Mahomet followed by several shots. His prisoner had taken advantage of the dark to make a dash for freedom even though Mahomet had 9 pistol in his pocket. It was a brave thing to do and well worth trying because, having been captured from a gang, he would have been hanged anyway. As it happened, he got clean away and the only effect of the shooting was to wake Nganga our splendid flat-footed cook, who got up and served a three course dinner within fifteen minutes.

We went on talking to the remaining prisoner until it got light and managed to get out of him a statement that he had been forcibly recruited a few days earlier and taken to the forest with a lot of other recruits. This was not much help as all prisoners automatically said the same when cornered in an interrogation. But our man did add one or two details about the timing of his moves though we hardly believed them. Then right at the last he told us the name of the gang leader. It was *Waruingi Kurier*, the man who was to become, over the years, my most haunting and elusive quarry.

At six o'clock we left Kamiti and drove back to Uplands where we heard that a further action had taken place during the night at Kitch' Morson's sawmill, right in the middle of the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest. We found that the track leading to the mill was in a shocking state from the rain and we slid from side to side as we made our way along it between

two walls of bamboo. Coming in from the west we were running downhill and after a time the bamboo gave way to tree forest. All along the track there were elephant droppings which showed that the beasts had been around a very short time before.

The mill itself stood in a clearing which was usually solid mud. Nearest the track were the saws and beyond them a police post had been built complete with barbed wire and earthworks. Further on still stood the hut in which the European staff lived. Further away on the side of a slope were the labour lines of the African staff; the whole little community was surrounded by tall trees and creepers and giant ferns.

We first went to the Europeans' hut but found no one there so we went on to the police station instead. Lots of people were congregated inside including Kitch' Morson himself, and he told us how the action had taken place. Just before dark most of the African labourers, who were also members of the Kikuyu Guard, had left the mill and taken up positions along the track in the hopes of catching the gang if they tried to move north during the hours of darkness. Despite the rain, they stayed in their ambush positions for most of the night but they saw no terrorists.

The gang itself had evidently had rather a rough time just before dark and one little group became separated from the rest. Plunging around among the black clinging trees they had suddenly found themselves standing in front of a hut. Tired out and soaked to the skin, they went in and found the place empty. Next morning the Kikuyu Guard came to their sleeping quarters in a similar state to find the terrorists in their beds.

A terrific fight broke out with spears and clubs which soon resulted in the surrender of the terrorists. Such was the story that Kitch' Morson told us, and five bedraggled and battered terrorists were produced to support it. We immediately got to work interrogating them.

I was still working on the theory that the gang was from Fort Hall and had come south after attacking the Grimwoods. I had more or less discounted the story about recruits and Waruingi Kurier which our prisoner had told us during the night. I was therefore angry to get the same old tale from these people of having been forced into the gang two days earlier. I was not only angry but I was also highly sceptical. But once I had talked to each of the five separately I began to wonder if perhaps I might have been wrong. For one thing it didn't seem likely that experienced Fort Hall terrorists would have gone to bed in a hut belonging to the Kikuyu Guard. For another thing, all five of the prisoners had new clothes and were still fat. They didn't look like hard-core gangsters. Finally they all said that the gang leader's name was Waruingi Kurier,

and that he was a Kiambu man well known to them who had recruited them during the past few days.

We learnt quite a lot about Waruingi from these five men. One of them had known him for several months and said he was the leader of an oathing group who used to operate in the Kassarani Area, a few miles east of my house at Kamiti. Another one said that Waruingi claimed to have gone with a gang to Fort Hall some six months earlier and that the Fort Hall men had tricked him, robbed him of his weapons and deserted him when attacked by Security Forces so that he had been obliged to return with his men to Kiambu. Yet another story was that Waruingi had built up his own gang in Kiambu District but had fallen foul of the committees there, because they did not want any violence in their areas. The man who told this story had heard that Waruingi had eventually come to an agreement with the committees to take his gang to the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest. This left the Reserve clear but at the same time showed that Kiambu men were really fighters as well as money-raisers and suppliers.

All our prisoners were evidently greatly impressed by Waruingi's personality. They were undoubtedly afraid of him because his discipline was harsh. They told a story of one of the recruits who had been caught leaving the line of march to relieve himself without permission, and had received sixty strokes with the kiboko for his punishment. They said that the rules of the gang were such that they were liable to the death penalty for a whole list of offences including love-making with female terrorists. In actual fact it was pretty clear that they admired Waruingi as a keen fighter and at the same time feared him.

Eric and I stayed talking to these prisoners for a long time and then returned through the forest to Uplands, where we found three more terrorists recently captured by the Kikuyu Guard.

By this time the whole of the area round the southern tip of the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest was echoing to odd bursts of gunfire as small gangs met patrols of police, Kikuyu Guard, or the King's African Rifles. In Uplands police station I listened in on the Kiambu District wireless set and it was soon obvious that the same situation prevailed all along the forest edge. District officers, chiefs, headmen and tribal police were out in Githunguri and in the southern half of Gatundu. Most of them had contacted little groups of terrorists at some stage during the afternoon.

For the rest of the day and most of the night Eric and I travelled round visiting police stations and Kikuyu Guard posts, collecting prisoners and interrogating them. It was clear that the gang had split up and it was equally clear that most of our prisoners really were recruits. By the early

hours of the following morning I had at last convinced myself that they could not possibly have carried out the raid on Mr Grimwood's house. Just before daybreak we returned to Kamiti for a meal and a clean up. We then went into Kiambu and gave an account to the District Commissioner of what we had seen. After that we returned to the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest and continued our journeying from one police station to another.

By night-fall the Security Forces had killed or captured sixty terrorists. We had not found out very much about the gang though we had learnt a lot more about Waruingi because one of our prisoners had been with him for some months. His story confirmed the odd fragments we had picked up from the others. Waruingi was the son of a man who formerly worked for a European settler in the Rift Valley and was about twenty-six years old. His family had originally lived in Kiambu and he had returned there at the age of twenty-one. Since then he had worked as a stone-breaker in a quarry and as a clerk. Waruingi had become a member of the Mau Mau long before the Emergency and had been the leader of a team of money collectors. His job was to administer the Mau Mau oath. After a year of this he got bored and decided to take some men to join a gang in Fort Hall because there were no proper gangs in Kiambu. As we had already heard, his expedition was a failure and he returned to Kiambu in August 1953 with an intense dislike of Fort Hall terrorists which he retained for the rest of his career.

Our prisoner had joined Waruingi on his return from Fort Hall. For a time they had continued to administer oaths and collect money but by the end of September Waruingi was again restless. He relieved his feelings by butchering individual Africans who were against the Movement. As the days went by he did less oathing and money collecting and carried out further executions. He also enlarged his gang and started to steal weapons.

During November and December Waruingi and his gang—now twenty-seven strong—roamed around the southern part of Kiambu District. Usually they based themselves on Kahawa but they paid one visit to Gatundu. They called themselves the Kiambu Battalion: their task was to 'Redress Wrongs'. Waruingi was not quite sure what that meant but his actions were designed to kill members of the Security Forces, loyalists or Europeans. On one occasion, he went to slay a priest but failed to appreciate that the house had two storeys—a rare thing in Kenya—and so missed his victim who was asleep upstairs. On another occasion he caught two nuns but let them off with 'three heavy blows from his club'. The age of chivalry was not quite dead.

The general build-up of incidents which we had noticed in November and December had been due almost entirely to Waruingi. Though we were alarmed by the trend, the Man Mau leaders in Kiambu were far more anxious because his actions cut clean across their policy. The story we had heard about these people asking him to take his gang out of the District was evidently true. The only other point of interest which we had assessed from talking to all our prisoners was that the gang Waruingi took to the forest had been about seventy strong. It seemed that we had virtually eliminated it. We issued a bulletin to that effect on our return to Kiambu at about eight o'clock that evening.

Everyone was very pleased with the results of the three days' 'battle' and Eric and I were looking forward to a long night's sleep, when a message came through from Gatundu to say that a large gang had come out of the forest at Matara a short time ago and stormed the Kikuyu Guard post there. They had utterly destroyed it. A company of the K. A. R. which had gone into the forest at that point the previous day had heard the sounds of the engagement and came dashing out just in time to exchange shots with the gang as it withdrew. They had succeeded in taking one prisoner.

Eric and I immediately set off once more but further rain had made the roads virtually impassable. It was midnight by the time we got hold of the prisoner: we found that he was tough as nails and very uncooperative. All the same we were not feeling particularly sympathetic, and by first light we had discovered that the gang concerned came from Fort Hall and was led by General Kago, commander in chief of the Fort Hall terrorists.

Having got this information we went to Matara to see if we could find any wounded terrorists; the description of the action had led us to believe that there might have been casualties. We found the Kikuyu Guard post burnt to the ground and the market a shambles. There were plenty of signs of injured terrorists including several pools of blood and a lump of brain. But although we searched carefully there were no bodies.

We got back to Kiambu by four o'clock that afternoon because I had to attend the weekly meeting of the District Emergency Committee. At this meeting I tried to piece together the events of the last few days but found that we really had remarkably little idea of what had happened. There had been two well co-ordinated assaults on Grimwood's farm and Matara respectively. There had been the original over-running of the Kikuyu Guard post near Gatundu, and there had been a mass of tiny engagements all round the north end of Chura and in the west of Gatundu and Githunguri. What did it all mean?

Perhaps I should have been better occupied during the preceding days in waiting at Kiambu and piecing the puzzle together. I don't know, but I doubt it. Had I sat there nothing much would have come in because the F.I.A.s were themselves out picking up the information from the Kikuyu Guard, retrieving prisoners and weapons, and getting ready to brief me and Eric when we arrived. By acting as we had we had at least been able to keep everyone informed about what was going on and we had kept the District Commissioner and others at Kiambu roughly in the picture. Furthermore although we hadn't been able to say which engagement had been with what gang we had identified a new leader in Waruingi, found out a bit about him and established the fact that Kago had been in the District with a large number of Fort Hall terrorists.

What a muddle! I kept forgetting what I was talking about at the meeting. I had a nice beard and lots of information but I didn't seem to be getting it across. Perhaps I wasn't speaking in a clear, concise way. I had had little sleep for the past four nights, indeed I had done without any at all for the last three of them. I soon decided that the Emergency Committee would be better off without me so I left to fit the rest of the puzzle together next day and went home. Eric was asleep and I followed suit, too tired even to eat.

When I woke it was dark. I was being shaken and shaken. Two people were in my room one of whom was holding a pressure lamp. The other was Denis Kearney. After a long time I understood. The man holding the lamp was Kitch' Morson and he was telling me that he had with him an African who could take us to the head of the Chura Mau Man committee, Gitau Kari. I was off my bed in a flash and some time later the three of us were creeping up to a shed behind the Forest Inn on the Nairobi road. Usually I love creeping up to sheds in the night but this time I didn't like it at all. I thought perhaps I was tired and would enjoy it more as the cold night air brought me to my senses.

We got up to our objective without anything happening. No sentry gave an alarm and no sound was heard to indicate that anything more sinister than garden tools lay behind the wooden door. We looked at each other as though wondering what to do next. Then Kitch' said 'Fungua Mulango' which means 'Open the door'.

There was a pause and then a scuffling but nothing happened. Kitch' again ordered the occupants to open the door and this time they obeyed. Two men came out—one vastly powerful, the other a little weed. As we saw them appear we had no doubt that we had been successful. We were just thinking how easy it was to pull off good coups if one has the infor-



Bill Henning



Tribal police

Peter Dempster



Kikuyu huts



mation when the big man, moving like lightning, picked up a stick and took a mighty swipe at Kitch\* who had lowered his gun.

I haven't much idea of what happened next except that Denis and Kitch' between them overpowered the big man while I hurled myself at the weedy one and sat on him, though he had made not the slightest attempt to escape or to carry out any offensive act. Once I was securely on top of him I shone my torch in his face. He had thick lips and pop eyes. I remember thinking that he looked like a goldfish and that I felt ill.

After a bit we were back in my house at Kamiti. Kitch' and Denis talked to the tough one and the Goldfish while I watched foolishly from a chair. Later Eric joined us. As the night wore on I found it more and more difficult to decide what was happening. Eventually Kitch' said that neither of the prisoners was Gitau Kari. I felt sorry for the Goldfish and wanted to give him a cup of tea but Denis said that he was a bad Mau Mau and had obviously had his supper already. After that I wanted to know if the big one played rigger. Eventually Kitch' and Denis went home and I went back to bed. I woke up later with a roaring temperature, so I stayed in bed. During the day my temperature got worse so I took an aspirin which Eric found in the bottom of his kitbag. It was no use. Two days later I was in the British Military Hospital in Nairobi with a patch on the lung, whatever that means. I did not fully resume work until February 20th, one month later. During that time Bill Henning—my Nairobi eye—came to Kamiti and took over from me.

*Chapter Five*

BIRTH OF AN IDEA

P

PERHAPS my organization had played a useful part in the storm which had recently struck Kiambu. We had gone from one place to another and had been able to give first-hand accounts of events to the people in District Headquarters. We had also done our best to find out what was happening from prisoners and we had woven a number of theories around what we had seen and heard in the hopes that the Security Force commanders might find them helpful when deciding where to employ their men.

Whilst I was in hospital, Bill Henning sifted all the information available and was able to tell the District Emergency Committee what had happened. It was very different from any of the theories which we produced at the time.

During the second week in January Waruingi had taken his own gang of twenty-five men to Dagoretti location just to the west of Nairobi. The head of the Mau Mau locational committee met him on his arrival and told him that there were a large number of local men who wanted to go to the Forest. He suggested that Waruingi, as the only Kiambu leader with a gang of his own, should lead them, and Waruingi agreed. Several days later the gang, now seventy strong, entered the southern part of the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest near Katamayo, having abducted a goatherd on the way.

They made a hideout in the forest for the night of January 14th and

next day split into two groups, one staying in the forest while the other went into the Reserve in search of food. Both groups ran into trouble with the Security Forces and lost men. Precisely the same thing happened on the following day, so Waruingi decided to move further north. But in doing so he lost his guide in the fighting. That night the gang passed close to Kitch' Morson's sawmill and a few men having become separated from the main body were captured there.

Next day Waruingi was in a bad way. He had lost a lot of men and had failed to get any food for three days because every time a foraging party left the forest they had run into the Security Forces. The loss of his guide decided him to return to his old area round Kamiti: maybe he would go to the forest again in a few weeks' time when all was quiet. He eventually got back with twelve of his seventy men left.

On the same day that Waruingi left Dagoretti, a gang of Fort Hall men, two hundred and fifty strong, moved south across the Chania River into the north part of the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest. These men had been living in the bush for months and were much tougher and better armed than Waruingi's. Kago was their leader, a man recognized by both sides as being the most daring general the Mau Mau ever produced.

Having settled down comfortably for the night, Kago detailed one of his lieutenants to take about sixty men and raid the Grimwood farm. Next day—January 14th—he moved his whole force west through the forest until they were opposite Matara. He then discovered the company of K.A.R. who were camping there and built his own hide about two hundred yards away. For well-disciplined terrorists no safer place could have been found.

In the evening of January 17th Kago attacked the Kikuyu Guard post at Matara. The K.A.R. in the forest heard the firing and came racing out to the village but by the time they arrived Kago's main force was withdrawing back to their camp, and the soldiers were able only to engage a small covering force of about forty terrorists. As they came into action they saw Kago himself setting fire to two cars belonging to K.A.R. officers who had left them there rather than take them into the forest. That same night the gang moved back over the Chania into Fort Hall. Next day the soldiers found the abandoned hide. Inside, pinned to a tree, was a letter to the Army Commander from Kago in which he said how much he had enjoyed 'lying with the Army these past nights'. He said that he was looking forward to doing so again soon.

Henning thus established that Waruingi and Kago between them had been responsible for all the incidents mentioned, except the attack on the



Kikuyu Guard post near Gatundu during the night of January 14th. Neither leader was anywhere near at the time. Eventually Henning discovered that a third sizeable gang, consisting of local men, had been in the area as John Faull, the F.I. A., had said at the time. Luckily they took no other action then. It was some weeks before we discovered who and what they were.

Henning told me this story when I came out of hospital and I had more time to think about it a few days later when I went down to the coast on convalescent leave. Ian Feild and Charles Spencer, the D.M.I.O. designate for Naivasha, came with me and we had a wonderful time. We settled ourselves into the Sinbad Hotel at Malindi and started to explore another totally new world. This world was not populated by terrorists, chiefs, district officers and policemen, but by hundreds of different sorts of highly coloured fish. "We had been swept off our feet by the novelty of goggling and we spent hours each day floating around in the clear luke-warm water watching the fish darting in and out of coral beds. Further up the coast we plunged about in the surf trying to ride the waves on boards.

We each had our own ideas as to the best sort of occupation when not actually in the water. Charles Spencer fancied the social life and the dances that went on at night and so he spent a lot of the day in bed. Ian Feild felt that it was a shame to waste the fresh air and sun, and lay on a towel on the sand. I was worried by my poor physical condition and raced up and down the beach doing forced marches, runs, press-ups and breathing exercises. My aim was to get fit. I also spent a lot of time pondering on the problem of how to get information.

I had been impressed by the speed and accuracy with which Bill Henning had sorted out the complicated story of Kago and Waruingi's ventures. I realized that the analysis which he had done would give our District Emergency Committee an excellent background against which to view future events. I was also aware of the fact that my organization was proving useful in the day-to-day conduct of affairs. What worried me was the fact that we never got information on which the Security Force commanders could make future plans. However energetically we might rush about the District, and however much we could pick up, we could only get what the Mau Mau gave us accidentally, such as information gained from observation or from interrogating prisoners. Even our interrogation was inefficient because it is very difficult to make any sense out of prisoners' stories unless you know something to start with. A little advance information enables the interrogator to trip up his prisoner when the lying starts.

I must admit that I did not get very far with my thinking. In one way only had I developed a line of thought to the point where I was ready to take action. I had decided to build small camps in each division where the F.I.A. could keep a handful of Africans who could help him with his interrogations and who could move around the countryside planting and visiting informers. Once we had some informers, I thought, we would be able to make a real start.

This decision took a firm hold of my imagination while I lay on the beach at Malindi. I could actually see the camps in my mind's eye: little clusters of mud huts with wire round them, and Africans pedalling in and out on bicycles. I was thinking about it as I drove into Kiambu from the coast after my leave. I was in a Nairobi taxi because Charles Spencer's car was lying at Sultan Hamid with a broken axle.

A few days later I was talking over the project with John Holmes. As usual he was encouraging but added a note of caution. Mud huts, barbed wire, Africans and bicycles do not appear out of the sky. They need money and we only had about forty pounds per month to spend on the whole of Kiambu, Thika and Nairobi. After discussing it for some time we decided to try the idea in one division first, and we selected Chura. We thought we should be certain of getting results in Chura as there were so many Mau Mau there. We selected it also because the F.I.A. was Glen Cottar who would know how to get the huts, barbed wire, Africans and bicycles out of the sky.

In the event Cottar did better than that. He got himself a nice house, garden and two cars as well. We were very grateful for someone who could get what we couldn't, but he knew the ways of Kenya better than we. His grandfather had lived in Kenya and an elephant killed him. His father too had lived in the Colony until he died of wounds received from a buffalo. Cottar believed that he was destined to be killed by a lion, so Mau Mau did not worry him at all.

Cottar soon had three or four loyal Africans living with him and working for him. In a very short time it was obvious that the scheme was going to work. By the end of March we too had a small team of Africans at Kamiti and were building a camp for them there. We had discovered from Cottar how you did it without money and it was really very easy. First Eric went to the local chief who agreed to provide poles for the huts. When they arrived Eric's men selected the stoutest ones and stuck them in the ground in a number of circles, one circle per hut. Next they got thin and supple strips and fastened them round the thick posts horizontally like the metal hoops on a barrel. These strips encircled the poles with six

or eight inches between them. Each circle consisted in fact of two strips, one fastened to the inside of the poles and one to the outside. When completed, this made a framework for the walls and the men then made a similar basketlike frame for the roof, which was thatched with banana leaves. Eric's men were able to do all this by themselves because it is part of every Kikuyu's education to learn how to build a hut.

The only trouble was getting labour to make the walls as that involves a lot of work. First they have to dig earth out of a hole and make it into mud by pouring water over it and paddling in it. The builders then take the mud and pour it in between the outer and inner rings round the upright poles. Finally the whole thing is 'patted' over to give a surface. It is easy enough but cats up man-power.

Eric solved the problem with his usual brilliance. He waited until Sunday when the labour from the surrounding estates came into the Dukka at Kamiti to buy beer and lemonade. Once there were a lot there he raided the place with his bodyguard and carried off the luckless men to have their papers checked. While the check was taking place—and it somehow took all day—the men made the walls. By this means the camp was completed in about three weeks. We also picked up one or two terrorists in the raids! It is good to remember that the labourers who helped us in this way almost all enjoyed themselves. Hut building is traditionally a happy time with the Kikuyu and a communal task. Similarly with us it was a bit of a party, with singing and drinking going on at the same time.

By the first week in April we had two camps: one in Chura and one in Kamiti. Ours was really meant to act as a holding centre in which prisoners could stay for a day or two to enable Eric to interrogate them and our men were originally meant to be guards for these prisoners. I can never quite make out where they came from, but Eric collected them somehow. I think he started by getting two really loyal and decent Africans from the Reserve. They were both beyond their first youth, steady and well proved in the Emergency. These were Gitau and Kihara. Next he brought in a young chap called Chebere who had helped him with information in the past, who was a Meru by birth. Chebere in turn brought a friend of his—also a Meru—called Gicheru. These four started the camp going.

The next arrival was another young man who was something of a wanderer. He was called Kimani and he sent for his cousin Chege. One more man came at the start to be clerk and translator of documents—Kikuyu into Swahili. His name was Kinyanjui, but we called him Crook Boy because he used to cheat at draughts. This, then, was our team. Gitau

and Kihara, Chebere and Gicheru, Kimani and Chege, Kinyanjui. The skill with which Eric picked his men became apparent as the months passed. Every one of them stayed with us to the end except for one whom the Mau Mau killed.

Although the building of our camps and the raising of our teams was the main interest during March, the normal round of duties continued. On my return from leave Bill Henning told me how the centre of gravity had swung back to Thika District. Next day I went there to get a first hand account of events from Jacky Miller.

There had evidently been some pretty brisk engagements during the past week and the day before my visit a gang had sacked the Thika Club and killed the barman. Miller had himself been ambushed twice while trying to keep the gang under observation until troops arrived, but each time he escaped unhurt. Some time later I heard more about Miller's exploits from an eye-witness who had seen him rescue a wounded police constable under fire. When Jacky found him, the policeman had one bullet hole in him. By the time Jacky got him back under cover he was dead, having been hit twice more.

Big actions such as this were easy enough to understand. They fitted into the picture of Kiambu, Thika and Nairobi as the main Man Mau base, because we expected large parties of recruits to pass through the area and we expected hardcore forest gangs to come into Thika District to meet them. What we could not understand was the rash of minor incidents that was occurring all along the border between Thika and the Reserve Districts of Fort Hall and Kiambu. There were incidents round Ruiru in the south and incidents round Makuyu in the north, none of which looked like recruit movement. There were also a number of incidents in Gatundu.

Gradually we built up a picture of two gangs. One of them we thought was dividing its time between an area of the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest, south-west of Matara and the Settled Area between Thika and Ruiru. The members of this gang would be Kiambu men. The other gang seemed to be based in the northern half of Thika where the labour on the farms consisted mainly of Fort Hall Kikuyu. This gang would probably be composed of Fort Hall men: we had great difficulty in getting the authorities to take these gangs seriously because they cut clean across the Mau Mau policy for the area.

During my absence Bill Henning had done very good work. When I returned I told John Holmes that I thought it would be a waste to send him back as liaison F.I.A. in Nairobi. Instead I suggested that he should go as D.M.I.O. to Thika because there really was a need for a full time man

there to work for the Emergency Committee and to organize the activities of Miller and Mordaunt. John Holmes agreed and arranged for Bill Henning to become an officer. He also replaced him in Nairobi by Sergeant Don Bush who turned out to be an exceedingly capable man. Although Helming was to be a D.M.I.O. in his own right I continued to be responsible for Thika while Henning was to work as part of my organization.

One day in March Eric and I had an interesting experience. "We had been driving round the districts and happened to call at Kikuyu police station in south Chura. There we found the Arthur Rank film unit making a picture about Mau Mau and we were amazed to see what a large number of technicians were needed to film one little scene. There seemed to be a separate man to do every little job. We asked one of the men about this as it seemed uneconomic to bring so many people out from England and by way of an answer he showed us some big boards covered with silver paper which were used for reflecting the sun's light. He explained that sticking the paper onto the board is done by paste, and is a painter's job rather than a carpenter's job, as carpenters work with glue. He agreed that one man could do both jobs but said that there would be trouble in the Union if the carpenter was caught doing the painter's work so they had to bring both along.

This struck us as being very funny. Eric, who had been brought up in a country where affairs are managed in a more sensible manner, was convulsed. Later on he told his Africans about it and they thought it was a terrific joke. In fact they never forgot it and eighteen months later they were still likely to say they couldn't do this or that job because it would mean doing one of the others out of their work. Luckily we had no Union so we just cracked their heads together, which was sure to bring roars of laughter from the others.

I saw the film some time after I returned to England. It was called *Simba* and was quite realistic in some ways, though how the Mau Mau managed to survive in the Aberdare climate wearing little more than a sarong and a feather in their hair was a puzzle. Luckily only the leader's bodyguard wore this strange get-up: the rest were dressed in a more normal way.

Soon after this incident John Holmes came round to see how we were getting on and spent two days visiting Kiambu and Thika. As usual he showed great interest and suggested many new ways of getting information. He was a stimulating person to talk to and an ideal man to run affairs. He did not so much try to say how we should work as ask what had produced results in the past and then suggest ways for developing the idea.



Jacky Miller

At about this time he offered me the job of going round all the F.I.A.s in the Colony to try and help them work out methods of getting information. I did not accept the offer as I felt that it would be impossible to suggest ways if one had no organization with which to experiment. I knew only too well that if you said, 'Try this and try that', it was always too difficult, too risky, impossible to get the funds or something. With my own people it was different. I could always make them try it and actually watch them or help them do it. I could accept responsibility for the risks and go and agitate for more funds. I realized that an Inspector of F.I.A.s working in other provinces and districts and without his own area would get nowhere. In many ways I was sorry as I should have liked to get into the more active areas of Nyeri or Embu and see other parts of the Colony which were unknown to me.

So far as gangs were concerned March had come in like a lion and it looked as though it might be going out like a lamb. The 25th was a Sunday and for once neither Eric nor I had much to do, so we went into the operations room at Kiambu soon after breakfast to see if anything was going on. Nothing interesting was happening in Kiambu or Thika but there were vague reports of a good-sized gang just across our northern boundary in Fort Hall. It was a nice sunny day so we decided to go and see if we could help in any way.

We drove along the main road to Thika and then turned left, through the coffee estates where Mr Lyall Shaw had been killed four months previously and into the Fort Hall Reserve. At first there was no sign of any unusual activity but as we got nearer the forest we started to meet little groups of policemen moving in the same direction as ourselves. Once or twice we passed people whom Eric knew and he waved or smiled in their direction while they shouted back some form of greeting.

Eric was driving our Land-Rover, dressed as usual in a khaki shirt, very short shorts, shoes, socks and a blue beret. His sten-gun was conveniently balanced on top of the instrument panel. Two of his men were in the back, one of whom wore a pistol while the other carried a simi (Kikuyu sword).

As we drove along I looked at Eric once or twice and noticed that he was obviously very happy. As always he said very little but for him the day held high hopes. For once he would be free to chase the gang without worrying about collecting information or interrogating prisoners. There was every chance of one or two good actions and even if we were disappointed in that respect he was sure to see a lot of his friends from the Kenya Regiment or the Prince of Wales' School. For concentrating in



Building the Kamiti post

The Special Methods Training Centre, Kamiti



one spot a large number of F.I.A.s, District Officers, soldiers and policemen, there was nothing to touch a foray from the forest by a large gang.

After a short time we arrived at a Kikuyu Guard post and Eric recognized a friend in the officer in charge. This man seemed to be quite excited and told us that one of his patrols had just been fired at by a large gang who were resting in a valley not more than five hundred yards away. We decided that we should try to pinpoint the gang's position so that we could direct onto it any troops or police that might arrive. In this sort of action operations room would try to keep the gang plotted on a map and direct army or police patrols to the spot by wireless, so we guessed that more forces would be arriving soon.

We decided that the best solution would be for Eric's friend to drive along the ridge on the south side of the valley while we would go on the north side. On this occasion the other man spotted the gang and directed onto it some of the East African Artillery who had come from Thika as infantrymen. As soon as we heard the shooting we left our vehicle and clambered down the wooded slope of the valley until we could see the right end of the enemy line across the valley in front of us. The enemy held their position in a plantation of wattle so we didn't see much, but we could hear the leaders shouting orders and the guns going off. The gang also had a bugler who bugled lustily throughout the engagement. The whole performance was most enjoyable; rather like a provincial tattoo organized in such a way that the spectators just can't see as much as they would like but are none the less aware that all the performers are happily excited. An unexpected amenity was that we were evidently in very little danger. One or two bullets did land in the trees above our heads but we thought they were only Overs' from the main battle.

After a time the gang withdrew east down the valley. This meant that they were going away from the forest, which suited us well. They were already about fifteen miles out into the Reserve so they would have a long way to go before they would be safe again.

We now thought our best chance was to drive as fast as possible down our ridge and cross to the south side of the valley in the hope that we should thereby cut them off. We did so, but as we drove from north to south the gang crossed from south to north, so we only saw them disappear over the crest three hundred yards away. Soon afterwards the East African Artillery arrived, having followed the gang after the previous engagement.

Our little party decided to drive to the next but one ridge to the north. On the way we found where the gang had crossed the path, and as we

arrived a straggler appeared. We shot at him and chased him down the bank but he escaped. This incident made us late for our next chance. As we got to our chosen ridge we saw the gang walking calmly up the slope about four hundred yards in front of us. They seemed to be about two hundred strong, and were walking fast but not rushing. They were wearing coats or mackintoshes and had their blankets slung bandolier fashion across their chests. Every now and again one would turn round and fire at us but there were no casualties because the range was too great. I watched them through my binoculars for about four or five minutes until they were out of sight.

We drove on to where we thought we might intercept them again but this time made a great mistake and only just saw them in the extreme distance. It was very difficult to realize how fast they travelled. As a rule, in order to drive from one ridge to the next we would have to travel two or three miles because the lateral roads were widely spaced out. Each ridge had a road along the top and the laterals ran from one to the other. It took just about as long to drive from a ridge to the next but one, as it did for the gang to walk from the intermediate ridge on which we would have last seen them, to their next but one. It was therefore necessary for us to drive across two ridges each time in order to head them off.

As the day wore on we began to get the form. At one point we met up with one of the Fort Hall F.I.A.s, Hardy, and had a terrific laugh at his expense. He had misjudged his ridges and arrived in his car almost in the middle of the gang. He had escaped by jumping out of the vehicle while it was moving and scuttling off into the bushes. The gang had been too busy to spend much time looking for him.

In the evening everyone got very split up. We had been waiting with a group of police when there was a loud burst of firing in front of us but far above on a ridge. We raced round a corner and were just in time to see a black mass of men crossing the road about a hundred yards away. They were soon out of sight behind a fold in the ground. Tins was the last time we saw the gang that day.

During the skirmishing there had been some casualties. The gang had lost over twenty men killed but the Kikuyu Guard lost ten, so it was not entirely one-sided. Most of the Kikuyu Guard had been lost earlier when their post had been overrun. Some prisoners had been taken during the day and Eric and I managed to get hold of two of them. We discovered that the terrorists had left the forest on Friday evening on one of their periodic tours through the Reserve designed to maintain morale among their supporters. Kago was in command. Originally they had **been** five

hundred strong but they had split early in the morning, so that they could cover more ground.

After the close of play for the day we had to go home, as it was really none of our business. The gang continued its journey throughout Monday and Tuesday and probably the same sort of things happened each day. On Wednesday they were making for the forest but in one of the skirmishes Kago was killed. When the news got around everyone was wild with delight. Kago was by far the most dangerous man in the Mau Mau ranks. On the other hand I suspect a lot of us were sorry in a way. It was impossible not to admire his skill and daring. He was also very amusing and the letters he wrote to a number of people such as the Army Commander were well worth reading. Although his death was good news there were some who felt a sense of loss at his passing. I was one of them.

Another important event occurred at the end of March though it did not seem to be very startling at the time. What happened was that a terrorist was killed in a small action in Gatundu and the police found an exercise book in his coat pocket. The man must have been clerk to the gang which was operating between the Ruiru settled area and the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest because the book contained the names of the terrorists, the dates on which they joined, and the registered numbers of their weapons.

Based on the information in the book we produced a card index for the gang, supplementing our information by further facts on each of the men mentioned obtained from the headmen in their home areas. From this we were able to work out which parts of the Reserve were most likely to want to help the gang and in consequence the places to which the terrorists were most likely to go to collect their supplies. Although we were not yet in a position where we could tell the Security Force commanders how to make contact with the gang, we were far less in the dark than formerly.

The full value of our discovery became apparent a few days later when the Kikuyu Guard caught another prisoner. When we started to interrogate him he began by saying that he had only joined the gang a few days before, that he didn't know who anyone was, or what they were doing. A week earlier the matter would have rested there but now we were able to know that he was in a particular section and that he lived in a particular part of the Reserve. We could fool him into thinking that we knew more than we did, and he gave us a good deal of information under the impression that we knew it already. Unfortunately we could not persuade him to help us so we didn't get far. All the same it was an immense advance on anything we had done before. We had moved from flints and stone axes into the Iron Age or whatever it is that comes next.

At the end of March Eric Holy oak was made a Warrant Officer in recognition of his status as the senior F.I.A. in my area, but nothing else of importance happened until the 8th April. On that day John Faull from Gatundu brought in a prisoner who had been captured from the local gang. His name was James.

I decided to interrogate James myself because I wanted to be up to date with the activities of that particular gang. Eric was busy elsewhere so Sergeant Miller acted as interpreter. We started off in the usual way with the prisoner saying that he knew nothing and that he had only been with the gang for a few days. I then decided to show him the book which had his own name in it and which showed that he had been with the gang since December. We were sitting in my office at the time, the three of us clustered round a desk by the window, with a clerk at the far end of the room working at a table on which the book lay. James was sitting facing me with his back to the clerk. In order to get the book I raised my hand, snapped my fingers and shouted 'Book'. The clerk picked up the book and threw it to me. I caught it and showed it to James.

Now James had not noticed the clerk and all he had seen was my raising my hand and saying something in English, whereupon a book, which he thought to be safely in the pack of his leader deep in the Forest appeared out of thin air. He considered this to be magic of a powerful sort and started to talk without more ado. His tale was rivetting. He had a lot of knowledge and for the first time I was hearing a true story. He answered all my questions at once without any evasion. He talked solidly from half past ten in the morning until eleven o'clock at night. We didn't dare stop the flow for fear that it might not start again. At the end of that time we had a very accurate picture of both the Gatundu gang and the gang in the north of Thika because James had acted as a liaison officer between them. We also had James whose only wish was to stay with us and work against his former friends. We were more powerful than they were and only too pleased to accommodate him in his wish.

James's first job was to go to Thika and see if he could show Bill Henning and his men who had one or two successful outings and recovered odd bits of kit. They were also able to discover a lot of people who had been sheltering and harbouring the terrorists.

Once they had done as much as possible in this area, they set to work on the gang in north Thika. James then went into Fort Hall and worked with the F.I.A. there—Hardy—against the same people in their alternative location. Everywhere he went there was success. The northern gang

particularly took a series of hard knocks at this time. I was very interested to see how this had worked.

Most of the time James had just shown the F.I.A.s places where they could ambush the gangs or pick up supporters. On one or two occasions, however, he had been released and had gone back to groups of terrorists who did not know that he was a prisoner. He had then been able to give the F.I. A. concerned accurate information as to exactly where they were. Once he took command of a small group of Mau Mau which he found, and led it into an ambush!

After his immediate usefulness was over James came back to Kamiti and lived as one of our team. He had a personality like a sledgehammer and was very, very amusing as well. Gradually, as a joke, he taught our men all about the Mau Mau ways. They started using Mau Mau slang, handshakes and signs. They started wearing their belts upside down, so the boy scout badge on the buckle was inverted. They had suddenly become Mau Mau—what a laugh!

While James was fooling about behind the house Eric and I were doing a bit of thinking. We had both heard the story of how Kago died. A Fort Hall F.I.A., called Hales, and two or three of his Africans had been scouting around during the running fight which I described before. They were standing on the slopes of a ridge talking to the Africans whose land it was, when suddenly Kago and several hundred gangsters were with them. Flight was impossible. Hales, realizing that he would be recognized, walked a short distance off and crouched behind a bush. The gang had not noticed that he was a white man. I 'Tales' Africans stayed chatting with the terrorists, pretending to be supporters. Shortly afterwards the gang moved off. Hales and his men rushed to the nearest unit of the Security Forces, told them the direction in which the gang were moving and intercepted them. As the gang crested the ridge the Security Forces opened fire from close range and Kago died.

The first significance of this story to us was that the gang, because they were not expecting to see a white man, did not notice anything wrong and, second, that they were fairly gullible about accepting anyone who appeared to be a Kikuyu and a friend. Some of James's escapades had corroborated these conclusions.

Another incident which we both remembered was an outing of Denis Kearney's in Uplands the previous November. He had heard that there were a lot of people in a particular area who were prepared to shelter gangs, so he had gone out one night with a few Kikuyu Guard. He then tested his information by knocking on the doors of the huts in which the

suspects were living and said that he was a terrorist with some friends who wanted help. In actual fact one of Denis's Africans must have done the talking. Several families offered him what he wanted. Here again was an example of the gullibility of the Mau Mau at that time.

Eric and I decided that we might cash in on the situation. Hitherto Mau Mau had fallen into the trap by accident in one or two cases. We thought that we might get Africans to impersonate gangsters as a regular means of getting information. Not only had we got James who knew exactly how to behave as a terrorist, but he had obligingly taught our team of seven men how to do it as well.

As soon as we began to try out the idea I started discussing it with John Holmes. As usual he was in favour of seeing whether it would work, but he saw the practical difficulties more clearly than I did. First of all, we would have to keep a proportion of the terrorists we captured to help us, but the law required that they should be handed over to the C.I.D. for prosecution. For that matter James should have been handed over days ago. We had some difficulty in making the necessary arrangements but John fixed it up in the end.

The next problem was what would happen if we ran into an army or police patrol. Again John worked out a system of clearing areas through District operations rooms, but it was not easy. More important still was the question of what the District commissioners and District officers would say. Denis Kearney had already been told that there were quite enough real gangs around without him reducing loyalist morale still further by producing his own. We were also afraid that some people would consider the whole project too dangerous and not worth risking lives on. Finally, we were nervous of the 'experts on Africans' who were sure to say that the idea just could not work.

To start with we did not want too much opposition. We thought that it would be a very good thing to prove that the idea would work before telling all the people who were likely to say that it would not. We therefore decided to keep the whole thing secret except for such senior officers as John Holmes wanted to tell.

We both realized that, thanks to such men as James, Holyoak, Hales, Hardy, Kearney, Helming and the Goddess of Luck, we had an idea which might be valuable. Just how valuable it was to prove we did not guess at the time.

*Chapter Six*

## THE IDEA GROWS UP

AFTER. my talks with John Holmes on the subject of developing our new idea we had ceased to regard the Post at Kamiti as an interrogation centre. Instead we called it the Special Methods Training Centre and gave Eric Holyoak the job of working out the best way of translating our theories into practice.

In the early days Eric organized his patrols in two halves. First there would be James and two or three of our men dressed as gangsters. It would be for them to approach and mix with the terrorists. Eric and some more of his men would wait a short distance away. If the first group got into serious difficulties Eric could go to their assistance. If all went well the pseudo-gangsters, as we called them, would talk to the real ones, find out what they could, and then come back to Eric who would decide what to do with the information. He could either return to camp after making a future date with the gang, which was a good way of getting ordinary information, or he could get soldiers or police to the spot in the hope that the gang would still be there, or he could go straight into the attack himself.

We soon saw that the best use for the system was to get information, because if we always directed Security Forces onto gangs immediately after visiting them, the terrorists would soon tumble to the idea. Despite the strong temptation to use the information for offensive purposes at once, we decided that we would not do so unless there was some excep-

tional prize to be gained, such as the elimination of an important gangster.

I was really rather a liability on these patrols because I could neither speak to the Africans nor understand what was going on. All the same it was important that I should have first-hand knowledge of the business, because I had to sell the idea in G.H.Q. and elsewhere. Furthermore, I consider that there is great advantage in a commander taking part in the operations which he directs. Unless he does so he cannot gauge the risk, nor can he tell how far it is feasible to push his men so as to get the maximum out of them. In some cases the presence of the leader acts also as a spur to the efforts of those below him, but in my case that was not necessary because men of Holyoak's calibre need no spur. We decided, therefore, that I should go on patrols providing nothing very tricky was involved. I went out several times though once I nearly caused a disaster.

On that occasion we were operating in Thika with the aim of getting news of the whereabouts of the leader of the northern gang. We had left our vehicles at a convenient place and walked over a ridge until we were within fifteen yards of a hut in which some of his gangsters were supposed to be. Eric, I and two or three others took up a position behind little bushes while James, Kimani and Chebere went inside. To start with it was pleasant sitting out in the open looking up at the brightly starlit sky. We had walked some way and I was glad to cool off and rest. After a time the cold of the night made itself felt. As the minutes went by it became increasingly difficult to sit so as to avoid pins and needles. I was soon wishing that I had stayed at home as it was obvious that nothing interesting was going to happen to me at any rate. We could hear faintly the voices of James and company talking to the gangsters, but we could see nothing. I hoped they would not be too long.

After a time it became noticeable that tempers were rising in the hut. Voices were raised and then to my alarm there was the unmistakable thumping of hippopotamus hide on human hide. Someone was beating someone else with a kiboko. Inside the hut an African was crying under his breath. There was a sudden yell which I guessed was due to the whip cutting round and catching the victim in front of the behind so to speak. The time had come to intervene and forgetting for a moment that Eric was in command I started to get up. I was soon pushed back to my place and told to keep still. Shortly afterwards our pseudos returned and we went home.

As soon as we were a safe distance off I started badgering Eric about what had happened. I was thoroughly irritated, especially as everyone else seemed to be enjoying a mighty joke. My mood changed as I learnt



what they were laughing about. Apparently when our men met the gang they saw that two of its members were drunk or partially so. One of the most stringent Mau Mau rules at the time was that terrorists should remain sober. Now James was pretending to be a fairly senior Mau Mau officer from Kiambu in order to have a reason for asking for the whereabouts of the gang leader, so he found himself in an awkward position. As a terrorist leader he would not carry much weight if he allowed the indiscipline to pass unnoticed, but with only two others to support him it might be difficult to enforce the rules. James was not the sort of person to be put off by a trifle of that sort, however, and he managed to get the rest of the gang to side with him against their comrades. They held a trial and the two offenders only just avoided a death sentence. In the end James ordered them to be whipped and fined.

Altogether it was a successful evening as we got some information about the gang leader and we got the money from the fined terrorists. At that period we were so short of funds that any extra was invaluable for paying informers or buying necessities for the Special Methods Training Centre.

At about the same time that we were starting our pseudo gangs, the Government launched a vast operation against the Mau Mau in and around Nairobi. For a long time it had been obvious that the destruction of the Mau Mau base would do more than anything else to hasten the destruction of the movement as a whole. In fact the loyalist community of all races had, for some months, been criticizing the delay in taking such a measure, though they would doubtless have reserved their indignation had they known how much the Government had already done in preparation for the task.

The problem which faced the Government was truly immense. Cut to essentials it amounted to the rounding up of the entire African population of Nairobi—slightly over 100,000—followed by the sorting out of the 70,000 Kikuyu. These men would then have to be screened to see which ones were known to be bad so that those identified could be segregated and despatched to specially prepared detention camps: their families would also have to be collected and sent back to their relations in the Native Reserve. As the Government expected to detain in the region of 10,000 Kikuyu this part of the job alone would be a huge undertaking.

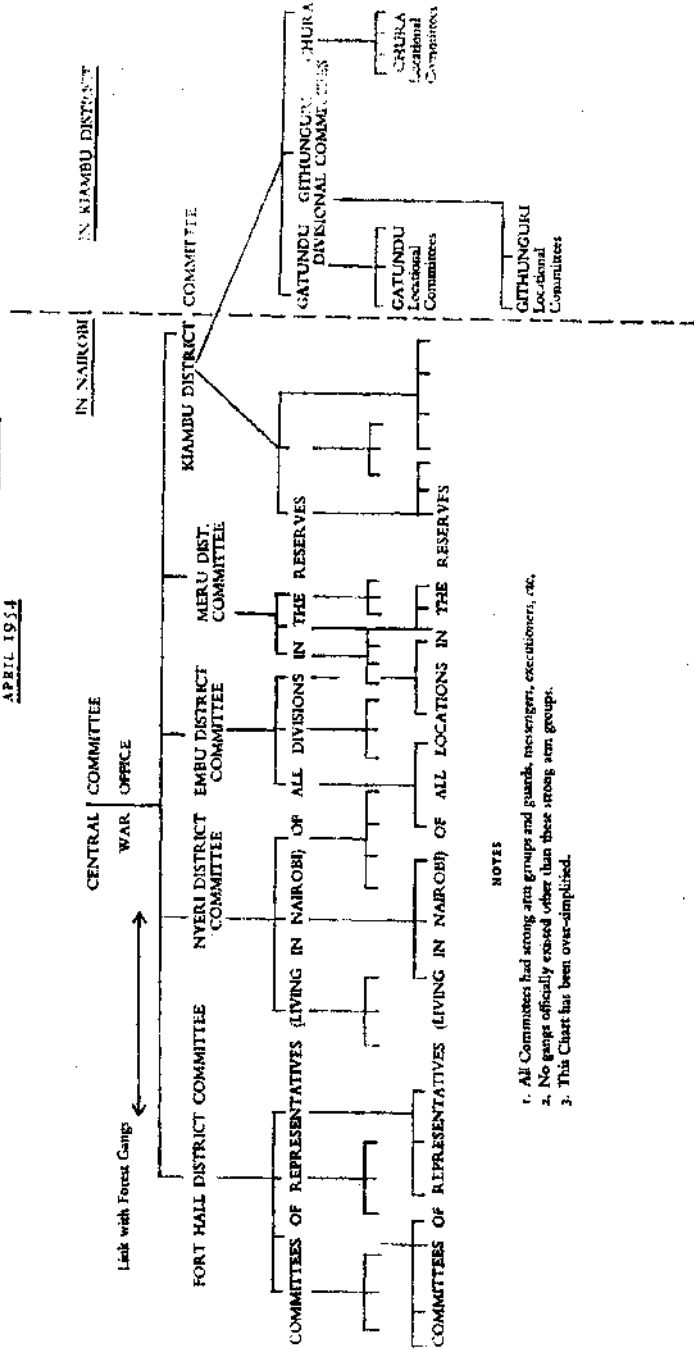
By April I was the official Military Intelligence Officer for Nairobi as well as Kiambu and Thika, so I used to go to the District intelligence meeting there occasionally, and I also attended certain other conferences on the forthcoming operation. The Government could not hide the fact

that the operation was coming off because of troop movements and building activities, but they took great care to conceal the date. These security measures worked perfectly, and the start of the operation was as much of a surprise to me as it was to the Mau Mau. All I could do was to hope that my resources, consisting of Sergeant Bush, were properly deployed.

Personally I took very little part in the operation though Don Bush bustled around for all he was worth. About four days after the operation started I drove to the main holding camp at Langata on the outskirts of Nairobi to see how things were going. Whilst there I saw a Special Branch officer with three Africans, who were wearing white hoods. They were looking at a long line of suspects and occasionally picking out ones who were then taken aside for questioning. I made some enquiries and discovered that the men in the hoods were themselves high ranking Mau Mau who had decided to help the Government. I thought at the time that this was a highly effective weapon, though the Special Branch officer would have to be careful to see that the hooded men did not just pick out their personal enemies.

During the weeks that followed we began to piece together the outline of the Mau Mau organization in the city. We found this out mainly as a result of interrogation and the translation of captured documents. The supreme Mau Mau body was the Central Committee and at least one man from each of the main districts of the Kikuyu Reserve was a member of it. Attached to the Central Committee was a body known as the War Office and Headquarters of the Land Freedom Army. In theory this had authority over all the terrorists in the Colony and its chairman was officially known as the Commander in Chief, Kenya. In practice its functions were concerned with the mechanics of collecting together recruits and supplies and passing them over to parties from the Aberdares or Mount Kenya. Under the Central Committee there were in Nairobi itself other committees representing every district in the native Reserves. Under these District Committees were committees representing every division in the district, and under them again committees representing the locations in the Divisions. In each case the chairman of the lower committees formed the next committee up, thus the Fort Hall District Committee in Nairobi would have consisted of the chairmen of the four Fort Hall Divisional committees in Nairobi plus perhaps a few extras such as Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and so on. It is difficult to imagine the system if you think of Nairobi as for example London, and the Kikuyu in Nairobi as Nairobians, in the same way as the people of London regard themselves as Londoners. The best way to understand would be to imagine that everyone who lived

MAU MAU ORGANIZATION IN NAIROBI AREA BEFORE  
APRIL 1954



NOTES

1. All Committees had strong arm groups and guards, messengers, executioners, etc.
2. No gangs officially existed other than these strong arm groups.
3. This Chart has been over-simplified.

ill London regarded himself as a man of Dorset living in London or a man of Devon or Yorkshire living in London. Then the Devonians could have their County Committee as the Fort Hall men had their District Committee, with under it, sub-committees representing those men from, say, South Devon, North Devon and Central Devon equivalent to the Divisional Committees of Fort Hall. That is how the Mau Mau organization existed in Nairobi.

The system with regard to the Kiambu committees was slightly different because the Kiambu District Committee in Nairobi controlled not only the Divisional Committees of Kiambu men living in Nairobi but also the Divisional Committees actually resident in the Kiambu Reserve.

In all cases the main job of the Committees was to collect arms, ammunition, money and recruits. In the first place the collection would be made by people organized by the lowest of the committees. They would pass the stuff to the next senior committee and so on up to the War Office, who would use it to fit out parties going to the forest.

As soon as we understood the system we understood the importance of Kiambu. Contributions from all the Mau Mau in Nairobi and all the Mau Mau in Kiambu were going into the machine through the various District Committees. But there were five times as many Kikuyu in Kiambu as there were in Nairobi so their contribution was much greater.

It was difficult to gauge the success of the operation, but it gradually became apparent that we had done three things. First, we had caught a high proportion of the senior committee members from Nairobi, which upset the system temporarily until replacements could be appointed. Second, we removed a high proportion of potential recruits by shipping off many thousands of surplus Kikuyu. Third, we cut Kiambu off from Nairobi by instituting a far more efficient system for controlling movement between the city and the outside world. Although Kiambu continued to collect money and equipment, the machinery for passing it on to the forest gangs was no longer there. Later the district formed its own gangs and a year after the Nairobi Operations there were probably more terrorists in Kiambu than in any other district, but they were doing no good there. This was the work of Waruingi Kurier. The effects of all this so far as Kiambu was concerned were unpleasant, but for the Mau Mau in the Colony as a whole the sealing off of Kiambu was a major defeat.

From my personal point of view the operations in Nairobi had brought about a major change. Hitherto Kiambu and Thika districts had come under Central Province from the administration's point of view, and

Nairobi from the police point of view. Early in April the Government decided to form a new Province so that operations in and around Nairobi could be properly co-ordinated by a Provincial Emergency Committee. It would be known as Central Province South and the Committee which was to sit at Thika would consist of the Assistant Commissioner of Police for Nairobi Area, the Brigadier in command of the troops in the area and the Chairman would be the Provincial Commissioner from Nyeri, who would thus have two separate jobs.

I became the Military Intelligence Officer for this organization with the title of Area M.I.O. Henceforth instead of acting as three separate District M.I.O.s working in each capacity with separate District Special Branch officers, I took my place opposite the Nairobi Area Special Branch officer, and had District M.I.O.s under me in the three Districts. I already had Bill Henning in Thika and during the second half of April and early May I received two more officers called Walter Gash and Norman Coleman who took on Kiambu and Nairobi City respectively.

This development made my job much easier and came just in time to save me from dissolving entirely as a result of my frantic efforts to get round all the F.I.A.s in all the Districts. As a matter of fact my commitment was enlarged to some extent because I was given the job of including Fort Hall in my orbit as the new committee would be controlling operations there. Fortunately I was only to concern myself with collecting and assessing the information from that quarter and not with the organization and handling of the F.I.A.s there, which was to remain the function of the M.I.O. at Nyeri.

The operations in Nairobi and the setting up of the new province had certainly taken up a lot of my time but they had not bothered Eric to any great extent. He continued with his experiments and took another big step forward soon after the outing in Thika when James had fined and flogged the drunkards. Not for the first time we struck lucky as the result of an accident.

On this occasion Eric had gone out in an area near Kiambu. Luckily I was delayed in the office and so missed the patrol which ran into a small gang earlier than it expected and before Eric's group had split from James and the pseudos. It was a dark night, and before the undisguised members of our party could get away they were all mixed up with the real gang. Obviously the terrorists would realize what was going on as soon as they saw Eric.

As usual James saved the situation by some quick flunking. Before the terrorists saw Eric, James told them that our men were the bodyguard of

an Asian who was one of the most senior of all the Mau Mau leaders. So convincing was he that the gangsters really thought themselves to be in the presence of an important person and became highly agitated. The Mau Mau at that time were very rank conscious and held their leaders in great awe. Part of the reason was the genuine nervousness that a private soldier in the British Army feels for a general, but part was due to the fact that Mau Mau leaders were perpetually whipping or executing their followers for the most trivial offences. Naturally the gangsters were nervous. At that moment one young terrorist looked round and saw Eric standing behind him. He gave vent to his feelings in the same way as a puppy does when excited—much to the amusement of our men.

The next problem was how to disengage from the terrorists. It was all very well to have passed Eric off as a senior Asian Mau Mau but sooner or later the gang would discover that half our Africans weren't even dressed as Mau Mau. They had been put off their guard by James's story but it could not last much longer. Eric decided that there was nothing for it but to attack and passed round a prearranged signal to the men. Chebere had already persuaded one of the terrorists to let him look at his rifle so he held the man up with his own weapon. Choosing a good moment James grabbed the gun from the man he was talking to and hit him on the head with it. The rest of the patrol overcame the other two without difficulty and by the time I arrived at Kamiti they were all back with the four prisoners.

Eric did not tell me the full story at first because he was in a hurry to get out again and arrest some of the supporters compromised by the prisoners. Later on we settled down to our dinner and discussed the matter.

As usual we didn't talk business over the meat because Nganga the cook would be standing in the hall waiting to bring in the pudding: in this case a tin of cherries. Once he had put them on the table Nganga retired to his hut and I pumped up the pressure lamp. The inevitable trickle of paraffin ran down the side and made a sticky mess on the table into which fell scorched insects attracted by the light.

'Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor,' I said running over my cherry stones.

'Don't worry, you split them evenly,' said Eric, having already sized up the situation exactly.

'How on earth did you manage to pass yourself off as a Mau Mau leader for ten minutes?' I asked. 'After all, even if they swallowed the story of your being an Asian, there aren't many of them around six foot tall with fair hair and blue eyes.'

'I don't suppose they noticed that,' he said, 'because it was dark and I

was wearing a hat.' There was a pause in the conversation. 'I think the main point is that they had been told by James that an Asian was present so they expected to see one. They weren't expecting to see a European and so when I appeared they took me for what they expected.'

I was just thinking how easy it is to persuade people that what they have been expecting has happened, when Eric spoke up again:

'It would be a terrific advantage to me to be present with the pseudos when they meet the gangs because then I would know exactly what was being said, who the leader was, and a lot of other useful things. Half the time we fail to make good contacts even on information produced by our own team because we don't know the exact layout and get in a muddle when we start firing. I think it would be perfectly possible for me to dress up as a terrorist and go with James; anyway at night.'

I had got used to having Eric around the house and didn't want to go back to steak and pineapple three times a day. I was even quite fond of him.

'No,' I said, 'certainly not.'

'After all, if they can take me for an Asian without my disguising myself at all, it should be easy enough to get them to accept me as an African if I black my face and wear the right clothes. And another thing, they must have been temporarily surprised at meeting an Asian Mau Mau, as no one has ever heard of such a thing before. As an African I should excite far less attention.'

The rat, which had been peacefully gnawing away at a crust of bread in the food cupboard, happened to attract the attention of Wambogo, our smooth haired terrier. For a moment or two there was chaos in the house then I thought of another difficulty.

'What about the language?' I said. 'You certainly can't speak Kikuyu well enough to fool the Mau Mau even if you do learn the jargon.'

'James will continue as leader of our gang and I will be one of the rank and file. He can do all the talking.'

'Supposing one of them talks to you. You can't stop that happening.'

'Perhaps it would be better if I pretend to be a senior leader with James as commander of my bodyguard. In that case only another very senior terrorist can talk to me because of their rules and if that happens I'll know who to kill.'

I had made the fatal mistake of arguing. Eric would now take the fact that he had bested me in discussion to mean that my opposition to his scheme was withdrawn. I decided to make the matter quite clear but at that moment Gitau appeared and asked Eric to go with him on some matter. I moved into the sitting room to read *War and Peace*.



Walter Gash

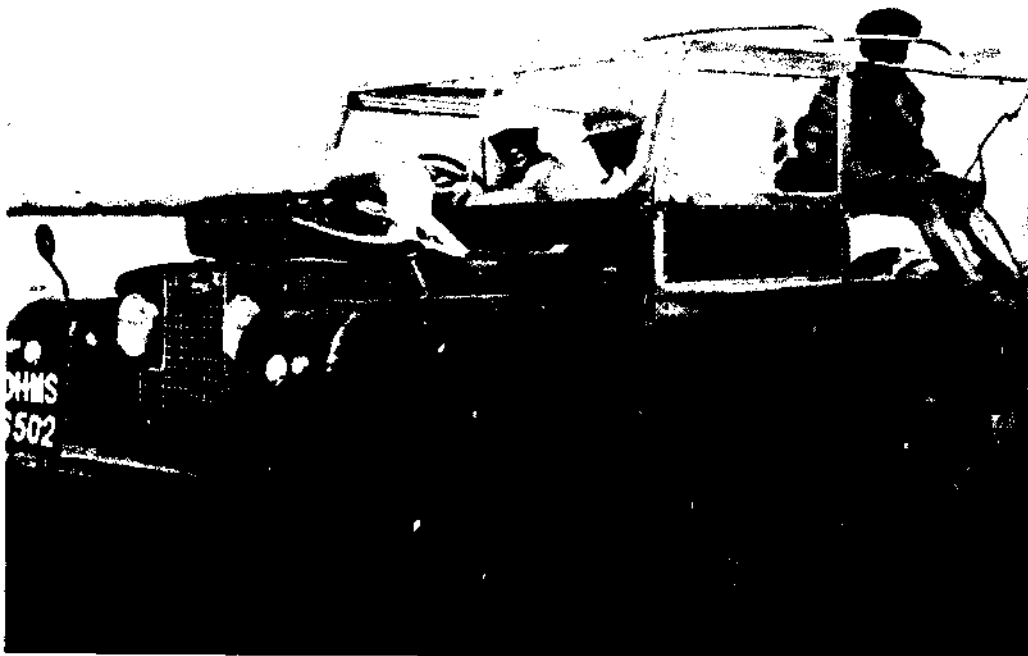


The staff at Kamiti

Left to right: John, Nganga, Kitson, Nyoike, Mahomet



The 'evening meal'



When Eric returned he told me that Gicheru believed **that the local** witch-doctor had put a curse on him at some stage during the evening. We realized this was no joke but there was very little we could do about it. Next morning Gicheru was all right, so I forgot about the incident. In the evening I went to Thika and he came with me as escort. I went into the Special Branch office there to talk to Bill Henning but had not been with him long before we heard voices raised outside. As time went on the noise got worse and it was obvious that a serious row was in progress. We went outside and found Gicheru lashing out with his rifle and screaming at the top of his voice. Eventually we got him down but he was still shouting away for all he was worth. Apparently he was telling everyone that he was being murdered by the witch-doctor and then quite suddenly he was talking nonsense interspersed with the most ghastly revelations about dressing up as Mau Mau. He was quite mad and luckily everyone thought that what he was saying was the result of madness.

We got hold of a hypodermic needle as quickly as possible and handcuffed him to the verandah rail. Once unconscious we took him to hospital and found that he had a temperature of 104°F. Next day he came round but the chances of his recovery from a witch-doctor's spell were not good, as the damage is done by the power of suggestion rather than through poison or other physical means. The real doctor however knew his job and told Gicheru that his disease was pneumonia and had nothing to do with a witch-doctor. Eventually he recovered and returned to us.

During the next few days I thought a good deal about Eric's intention to join with the pseudos and meet a gang. On the whole I thought it might work, so I said no more about forbidding him to try it. Bit by bit he proved that he was right and it was not long before I was going out with him to get 'first-hand experience'.

May was a very important month for my organization. Not only did it see the pseudo gang technique reach its final form as described, but our other methods started to pay off as well. This was particularly true in Thika where our ideas progressed the fastest, because the team of Henning, Miller and Mordaunt had been working together for longer than the Kiambu team and because the two resident gangs in the district gave the F.I.A.s better opportunities for gaining experience. It was just as well that our ideas started paying off in Thika because the gangs there had been doing a lot of damage. The northern gang alone had killed about sixty loyalists and Security Force members in the first four months of the year.

When we got information we would pass it to the operations room and

either the District Commissioner or the Superintendent of Police would decide what part of the Security Forces was best suited to deal with the situation. One of the F.I.A.s would then work direct with the commander of the force, selected to do the job. Usually all would go well but sometimes the information would be wrong and then the commander might get vexed with us for packing him off on a wild-goose chase. At other times the patrol might not be particularly efficient and then the F.I.A. would get fed up because his hard-won information had been mishandled.

Early in May we had one or two disappointments of this sort, and it so happened that at that moment we caught a terrorist who proved to be fairly helpful. I knew that the Thika F.I.A.s were ill-disposed towards the Security Forces so I decided to let Eric handle the matter. Accordingly we went to Thika later the same evening intending to do a reconnaissance early next morning. After an uncomfortable night in which we were eaten by mosquitoes in Jacky Miller's quarters, we drove out to have a look at the ground at five o'clock. We decided that we could get a military patrol to the spot indicated under cover of darkness and on our return to Thika we recommended a first light attack to the soldiers.

Eric and I then went back to Kamiti and got on with our day's work. At two next morning we returned to Thika and met up with the patrol. Unfortunately during the night the prisoner had escaped. This was a common occurrence in those days, because we had to keep our captives in all sorts of places to prevent their being seen in custody by their friends who would then have suspected that we had been told about their movements. Anyone who cared to risk being shot by his guard could make a dash for it and it worked about once in three times on average.

We told the soldiers that the prisoner had escaped and hoped they might agree to cancel the patrol, in which case I would have collected together a number of our own men to do the job. However, we had to say that we had done the reconnaissance, had pinpointed the position of the gang and knew the route to it. Naturally the patrol commander decided to continue with his own men.

By about three o'clock we had arrived at the de-bussing point and the patrol was gathered round the subaltern in charge. Talking in a low voice he ran over, once more, the main points of his briefing—quietness, no firing until we got to the camp even if we did meet the odd terrorists on the approach, and above all no firing without orders. Soon we moved off into the darkness with Eric leading, followed by the patrol commander and myself, and the rest of the patrol in the rear. Eric had James with him in case we accidentally bumped a sentry in the dark. James could have

spoken to him for long enough to enable Eric to overpower him without any shooting.

For the first twenty minutes or so I was alert to every little bump in the ground that might be a man lying down and every stump or bush that might be one standing up. Every sense was concentrated on the night around me. There was a moon but some cloud, so the night was light but visibility limited. Every time a man behind me kicked a stone my anger rose. They seemed like a herd of elephants but then at night everyone except yourself seems to be making a noise and in fact the men were moving quietly enough.

My thoughts began to wander. To begin with I merely meditated on the fact of my being so much quieter in my movements than the soldiers. After a few moments of these comforting thoughts I stumbled against a root and made what seemed to be a mighty crash. Actually it was no more than the tiny scraping that everyone, except Eric and James, made as they walked along. Someone down the line would be thinking how noisy everyone except himself was being. For a few moments my thoughts were again concentrated on the night and my movement through it. All too soon they had drifted off again. This time I saw myself leading the charge—counting the bodies—hearing James say that the grizzled old warrior with a beard lying dead at my feet was the gang leader himself. I must have been basking in these comfortable thoughts for some time, oblivious of my surroundings, when I was brought up dead in my tracks by running into the back of the subaltern I was following.

Immediately I was alert once more. He had moved up close behind Eric who was pointing at some vast dark objects to our right about ten yards away. I heard Eric say that the shapes were buffalo feeding in the grass, but that we would be quite safe if we kept moving on quietly. At the mention of buffalo I had become uneasy and was all in favour of moving on quickly and quietly as recommended. I had never seen a buffalo before and I was glad to have had the experience. Now I wanted to go and enjoy it into old or at least middle age.

At that moment all hell was let loose. From far back down the line there was a burst of sten fire which was taken up by several men with rifles. I could not think what was happening as it was obvious that from the savage little cracks that advertised their passage through the air the bullets were going almost straight up the line of the patrol. The next thing I knew was that the vast stationary shapes had exploded into violent motion and were moving like rockets in our direction. I jumped off the track and tripped into a thorn bush. There was a metallic crash a few

yards away as one of the buffaloes ran full tilt into a wire fence, which luckily turned it from its course. After a few tense tenths of a second I realized that the beasts were making off in front of us. I noticed that Eric was all right and then the full physical effects of the fright took hold of me. Fortunately etiquette demanded no more of me than to keep quiet while the patrol commander sorted out the situation. It was a purely domestic matter.

For a time there were confused mutterings of 'Who fired?' and 'What the hell is going on?' A moment or two later a corporal appeared from the rear of the patrol and slammed to attention saying in a loud voice:

'Antelope on the right flank, sir.'

'Shh,' said the patrol commander.

'Bloody fool,' said Eric.

'Aca,' said James, meaning 'No' and a lot of other things beside.

In the end we were able to discover that one of the men had seen a buffalo move and thinking it to be a Mau Mau had lost his head and fired, whereupon some of the others had followed suit. We did not discover who had fired first but that was of no importance. The facts of the matter were that the patrol could no longer hope to surprise the enemy but might well run into a buffalo whose naturally uncertain temper could well have been frayed by a few sten-gun bullets in his hide. We held a short council of war and agreed to withdraw forthwith.

We returned to the lorries and the patrol moved off to their camp. The officer, Eric, James and myself waited until dawn and then went back to the scene of the action to make sure that there was no dead or wounded buffalo in the vicinity. We found where they had been and the tracks leading to the fence. There was no sign of blood, so it looked as though they had escaped unscathed. But we notified the Game Department when we returned to Thika.

The operation had been unusual but then it was normal for operations to be unusual in some way or other. It had been a failure militarily but had provided us all with an interesting memory for after years. I was sorry for the patrol commander who would have to 'laugh the matter off' somehow, but then laughing things off is part of every officer's daily life. I myself had a little matter of another lost prisoner to explain away, so I couldn't afford to bother too much about other peoples' troubles. We were lucky that there had been no casualties. There was one disturbing aspect of the case which was that the F.I.A.s became even more certain that giving information to British troops was a waste of time. I was determined to stifle this idea.

As our new methods developed our successes increased. Two days after the buffalo incident Bill Henning produced some information as a result of which the police had a successful contact with a gang. Events were moving fast. Next day there was a further operation which Jacky Miller was attending with an important prisoner who had been acting as a guide. On the way back to Thika he leapt out of Miller's Land-Rover and, in spite of being handcuffed and in sight of the vehicle behind when he jumped, managed to escape while the trucks pulled up. This was a terrible disaster for us, coming so soon after our last effort. We had noticed before that the C.I.D. were liable to be very vexed if one lost one of their prisoners and they ran true to form on this occasion. It is also interesting to note that if you killed a prisoner who was trying to escape they would probably charge you with murder!

Next morning there was a certain strained atmosphere when I arrived at Thika but luckily one of Bill Henning's men produced a bit of information while the C.I.D. and regular police were letting off steam. All present rushed out and were rewarded with the sight of a small gang running up a slope some way away. Phil Mordaunt, who was an athletic man, soon outdistanced the rest of the party and then pulled off a most remarkable feat of marksmanship by hitting two terrorists at just over three hundred yards. If anyone imagines that to be easy, let them try running for a quarter of a mile and then hitting a stationary target at three hundred yards. A running one is more difficult still to hit. The action was not important but our prestige was just a little bit higher. We were past the worst and next day we had a further success.

For some time Bill Henning had known that the leader of the northern gang had been using the labour lines of one of the farms in Thika to get food, so one night he had lain in ambush together with a carefully picked team of Thika F.I.A.s and police and his patience had been rewarded when twelve terrorists walked into his position shortly before midnight. In the fighting that followed two terrorists were killed, one of whom proved to be a particularly vicious man who we knew would never be far from the gang leader.

Early next morning Eric and I went to the scene of the ambush with Bill Henning while Mordaunt went off to get army and police patrols to sweep adjoining areas for the survivors. First we examined the bodies where they lay in their blood, and then we started casting round the area for tracks.

The action had taken place in a coffee plantation and we soon found a spot of blood on a leaf. The trail was not difficult to follow for a bit and

then it petered out. When this happened we would radiate outwards from the last positive sign until someone could pick up the tracks again. After a time we came to a place where the old leaves under a coffee bush showed plainly that the man had sat down and rested. Here he had made some attempt to staunch the flow of blood. The trail went on for another two or three hundred yards by which time it was clear that the quarry's wounds were troubling him more. The spots of blood were more frequent and we could see that he had been having difficulty in pulling himself along. Our excitement rose. In front of us we knew there was a terrorist. We knew he was wounded but we did not know how severely. He would know that he would be sure of conviction and execution if caught in such circumstances. If he was armed he would certainly shoot.

Soon we found another place where he had been resting. This time there was a much bigger pool of blood. We started moving forward very slowly on hands and knees to see between the coffee bushes. Eric was in front as usual. Suddenly I caught sight of a bit of rag just to Eric's right and shouted to warn him. I even went so far as to draw my pistol, which I seldom did for fear of accidents, but it was unnecessary. Eric and Bill Henning launched themselves simultaneously on to the wretched fellow, who was made prisoner with little fuss. The hunt was over but it had been fascinating while it lasted. There is no doubt at all that one cannot savour the full thrill of the chase until one hunts something which is capable of retaliation.

We spoke to our prisoner but he was not very helpful. We did, however, gather that the gang leader had been present in the ambush and that one or two of the others had been hit. Events were to show that he was not mistaken. The ambush had been amazingly successful and every single Mau Mau there had received injuries. Within two weeks they had all surrendered or been captured. The leader was the last but one to fall into our hands.

Our recent run of successes had been unprecedented. As a result of our informers and pseudo gangs we were getting to know a bit about the future movements of the gangs which was much better than merely analysing past events. We had a long way to go before we could say that we were producing the information that would enable the Security Forces to destroy the Mau Mau in our area, but when I looked at my aim, written on the piece of paper tucked under my Bible by the side of my bed I began to feel that at last I was on the road which led to the desired goal.

*Chapter Seven*

## OFFICIAL APPROVAL

ALTHOUGH we sometimes got such good information from our pseudo gangs that we could direct Security Forces on to terrorist groups, we also found that we needed a lot of extra background knowledge in order to operate our patrols. For example, we needed to know who the supporters were in lots of different areas so that our pseudo gangs could go and ask where the real gangs were. We also wanted to know details about gangs other than the two with which James had been working, so that we could extend our activities to different parts of our area. In other words, we had thought out a system for developing information to the extent necessary for bringing about contacts but we still had to get the raw information to develop.

While Eric had been working out the details of this system the three D.M.I.O.s in Thika, Kiambu and Nairobi had been going ahead building up a network of informers to get the background information. Interrogation of prisoners was also producing much better results now that we knew so much more about the people we were capturing. One of our most important jobs at this time was to devise a good system for recording all the information which the F.I.A.s were getting. Hitherto they had received so little that they could remember it; now we had so much that it was difficult to write it down in such a way that we could find it again when we wanted it.

As my organization increased in size I found that I had to spend more



and more time at my desk in Nairobi Area Special Branch. By the end of May I had three D.M.I.O.s and eight F.I.A.s to administer: it was my business to see that they got the right pay and somewhere to live; I had to ensure that they had transport and that they looked after it; worst of all, I had to try and find money for them to pay their informers and maintain their camps. Quite apart from administering my force, I also had to collect information from it and prepare reports for the Provincial Emergency Committee and at the same time make sure that the D.M.I.O.s were looking after their District Emergency Committees. Finally I had to co-ordinate all the various schemes for getting information, and provide the impetus necessary for keeping them effective. In addition to my office work I tried to visit each D.M.I.O. once a day and each F.I.A. at least once a week. In view of the distance involved this committed me to a heavy programme.

Towards the end of May I had a talk with John Holmes at which he said that the time had come to tell the M.I.O.s and F.I.A.s in other parts of the Colony about the ideas we had found useful in Nairobi Area. He also felt that the other two Provinces might have thought up methods of their own so that a general exchange of ideas would be worthwhile. He accordingly convened a meeting of all the D.M.I.O.s to be held during the third week in June in Nairobi. Before that could happen it would be necessary to get the approval of the senior officers of the Government and Security Forces to our new techniques. Already we realized that many of these people were opposed to our ideas—especially pseudo gangs—for a variety of reasons. Indeed John Holmes had even found opposition among our own Special Branch and Military Intelligence officers in other parts of the Colony. We had discovered a weapon which we thought would be decisive but we saw that we would have to overcome a lot of opposition before getting it into general use.

By this time Mr Gribble was no longer head of Special Branch having been promoted to a senior job in Police Headquarters. The new Assistant Commissioner was Mr Trevor Jenkins and he was very much in favour of our plans. This meant that all opposition from inside our own organization would be overcome in due course, but it was still necessary to overcome objections from outside. John Holmes decided to get the support of the Commander-in-Chief.

It is doubtful whether any other officer had such a wide field of operational experience as General Erskine. He had fought in the First World War as a junior infantry officer and in the Second World War as commander of an armoured division. Between the wars he had fought terror-

ists in India and after the second war he had further experience of such people when he commanded our forces in the Canal Zone. He was well known for the keenness with which he backed all projects that looked like paying off, no matter how much the conventionally-minded scoffed. During the year that he had been in Kenya he had greatly improved the situation, largely because he had utilized the terrific ability of the Kenya people themselves both black and white—rather than relying on imported soldiers and police. Now, we hoped, he would intervene and save our ideas from their enemies.

When the matter was put to him, General Erskine said that he would like to see what was going on for himself, and that he would visit Kiambu and Thika Special Branches and the Special Methods Training Centre at Kamiti.

The preparations at Kamiti for the great event were terrific. At that time I had as my servant a retired soldier from the K.A.R. named John. This veteran was without doubt smarter than the smartest guardsman in his khaki drill uniform, bush hat, white scrubbed gaiters, highly polished boots and two rows of medals. He had such a fine military bearing that if he wanted to go into Nairobi he only had to stand on the side of the road and salute all the 'bwanas' as they passed in their cars to get picked up sooner or later. The imminent arrival of a full general almost unhinged him, and he doubled round and round the camp picking up every speck of dirt. Eventually he was satisfied with the cleanliness of the area and settled down to teach two recently captured terrorists how to 'present arms' with Mau Mau home-made guns. They were to form a guard of honour at the gate.

The rest of the men had a good wash, brushed their hair and put on their cleanest clothes. Eric and I both had baths, though this was no great adventure in my case as I always have one every week. Nganga the cook shuffled down to the Dukka on his flat feet and bought a packet of chocolate biscuits and a tin of Nescafe. Nyoike stood our few remaining flowers to attention and cleaned up the chicken. By nine o'clock we were ready.

I went into Kiambu to have a last talk with Peter Dempster, the officer in charge of the Special Branch there, and with Walter Gash, the D.M.I.O. At the appointed hour General Erskine arrived. He had come informally in civilian clothes so he had no escort and there was no reception committee. Walter Gash explained how our new ideas were working out in Kiambu District and showed the general a map on which he recorded the positions of his informers. Peter Dempster pointed out the advantages that accrued to Special Branch as a whole from the efforts of the military

this gave far less cover so I decided that we had better start moving fast at once. Instead of running for the last twenty yards we therefore ran the last hundred and fifty and arrived panting round the hut. So far we had seen nobody and there was no sign that anyone had seen us.

I reached the door first and started to push it open gingerly: all I could see was blackness, a marked contrast to the bright sunlight outside, and I wondered how best to get the terrorists out without being shot at. By this time Peter Dempster had arrived and like Peter in the Bible he pushed past and into the doorway of the hut. Unlike his biblical namesake he waved a revolver at the inmates and started shouting at them in Swahili.

At that moment there was a bang from the rushes as the sentry woke up and fired at us. This was followed by a much louder and closer bang as Chebere returned the fire. I entered the hut behind Peter and got a confused impression of masses of people with their hands in the air looking as frightened as I felt. I could see lots of faces, and arms, the odd pair of shorts and a few feet, but I could not make out what belonged to whom. I hoped that Peter and I looked like lots of people as well.

As it turned out we had caught the whole lot inside the hut except for the sentry. The surprise element was decisive and the gang, thinking that they had been surrounded by troops, decided to take Peter's advice and come out without giving trouble. He explained that if there was any sign of resistance we would throw in a grenade, burn down the hut, shoot anyone who attempted to bolt and generally upset their plans for the future. All was going well.

Meanwhile Chebere had definitely gained the upper hand in his battle. The sentry, after firing four or five shots at us without scoring so much as an 'outer', had decided to make a dash for safety. Chebere's marksmanship was unfortunately no match for his courage, so after a few more shots he set off in hot pursuit. I was watching this out of the corner of my eye and was rather nervous. A lucky shot from the gangster might bring down Chebere in which case we would lose our rifle as well as the terrorist. I therefore swapped my pistol for the simi of one of the Africans guarding the window and sent him off to support Chebere.

By this time those who had been in the hut had filed out and were lying on the ground face downwards. On counting them up we discovered that we had one too few. Our remaining African went off to look in the swamp while I went in to look more closely in the hut. For a long time I could find no trace. I pulled out clothes, equipment, cooking utensils, documents, food and weapons but there was no sign of the missing man. I was thrusting my simi into all the corners and I had almost given up

when, plunging the blade into a pile of rags, I experienced a most satisfying sensation. The missing man squealed like a pig and the search was over.

The situation was now that Chebere and one of our Africans were chasing the sentry. One other man was searching in the swamp for weapons or anything else that might be there. Peter and I were sitting on the ground looking at the upturned backs of our eleven prisoners. At that moment further firing in the distance indicated that Chebere was still on the war path and we decided that Peter should go to see what was happening. Before he went he explained to the prisoners that the first man to move would be shot even if he was only going to scratch his nose.

For a time I stood looking at a row of backs, the owners of which gazed into the ground. They were still suffering from shock and were no doubt considering themselves lucky to have got away with their lives. This was a satisfactory state for them to be in but I was afraid that given time for reflection they might begin to realize that they stood to go down the hatch, so to speak. Such thoughts breed desperation so I decided to keep them from brooding too much. For a moment I ran through all the Swahili words I could remember and then launched forth into speech.

'Wewe watu mbaya sana,' I said, which means 'You are very bad men.' There was no reply. I tried again.

'Wewe Mau Mau.' This time one did reply with a laconic 'Ndio' (Yes).

The conversation seemed to have got bogged down, so I tried another line.

'Apana moto leo,' I said, meaning 'It's not very warm today.'

'Leo biridi sana, bwana,' said the spokesman.

'Labda mbua ingine te cuja,' I said, which means 'Perhaps we shall have more rain.'

'Labda tu,' said the spokesman.

The effort had nearly exhausted my stock of words and I was glad of a moment in which to work out some more epoch making sentences. Apparently I had done better than I thought for one of the terrorists started to jabber away at me, evidently supposing that I understood the language. Not wanting to lose face I shouted out 'Nyamassa,' which means 'Shut up' and added 'Bloody Nyangau' which was a favourite expression of Eric's. Nyangau is Swahili for jackal.

This brief exchange obviously created an impression as one of the terrorists made as if to look at me. I was pretty alert for any signs of movement and brought my simi down with a mighty swipe across the back of his head. I only used the flat of the blade, but it had a soothing effect on the whole party.

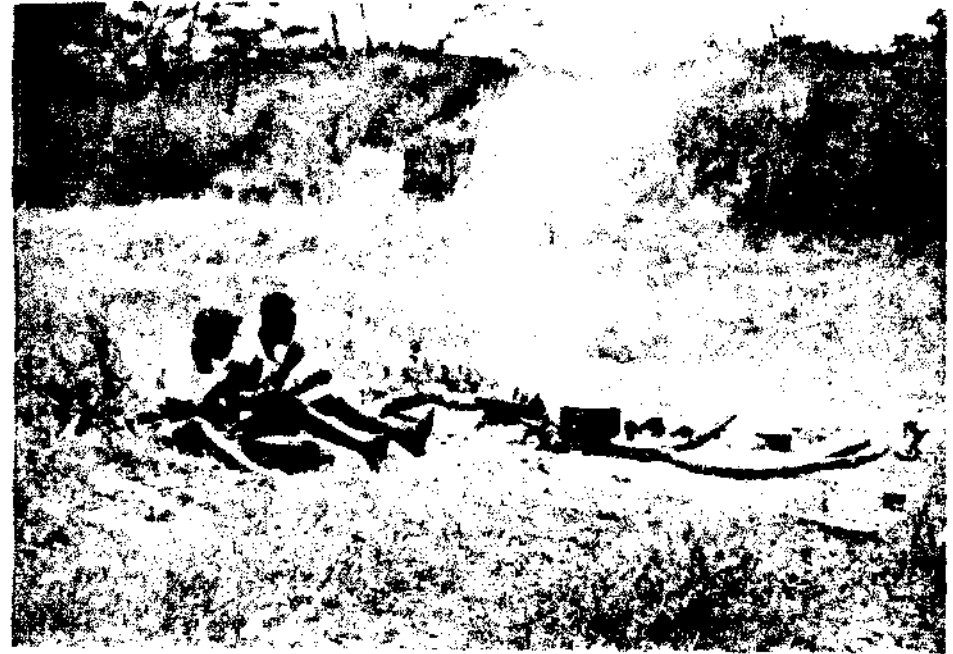
Time was passing and there was still no sign of anyone coming back to my rescue. I had been nervous before the operation started but had become elated after we had got the whole gang out of the hut. Now I was beginning to get fidgetty again. At that moment I heard some men coming towards me and thought that it was Peter and his party returning, but it was an even more familiar figure in khaki shirt and shorts wearing a blue beret that appeared a moment later. Eric had heard of the affair on his return to Kamiti and had hurried on with reinforcements. I was very glad to see him.

Thereafter the whole business sorted itself out. The sentry had escaped minus his shoes which Chebere had picked up. The gang leader and ten of his bodyguard together with five weapons were safely in the bag. It had not been a big operation or even a very dangerous one, but I was pleased with myself, though the whole thing had been made possible by Chebere and the brunt of the action itself had been borne by Peter Dempster. All the same it was a colourful interlude in my life as an organizer and office worker, and it was welcome enough in retrospect.

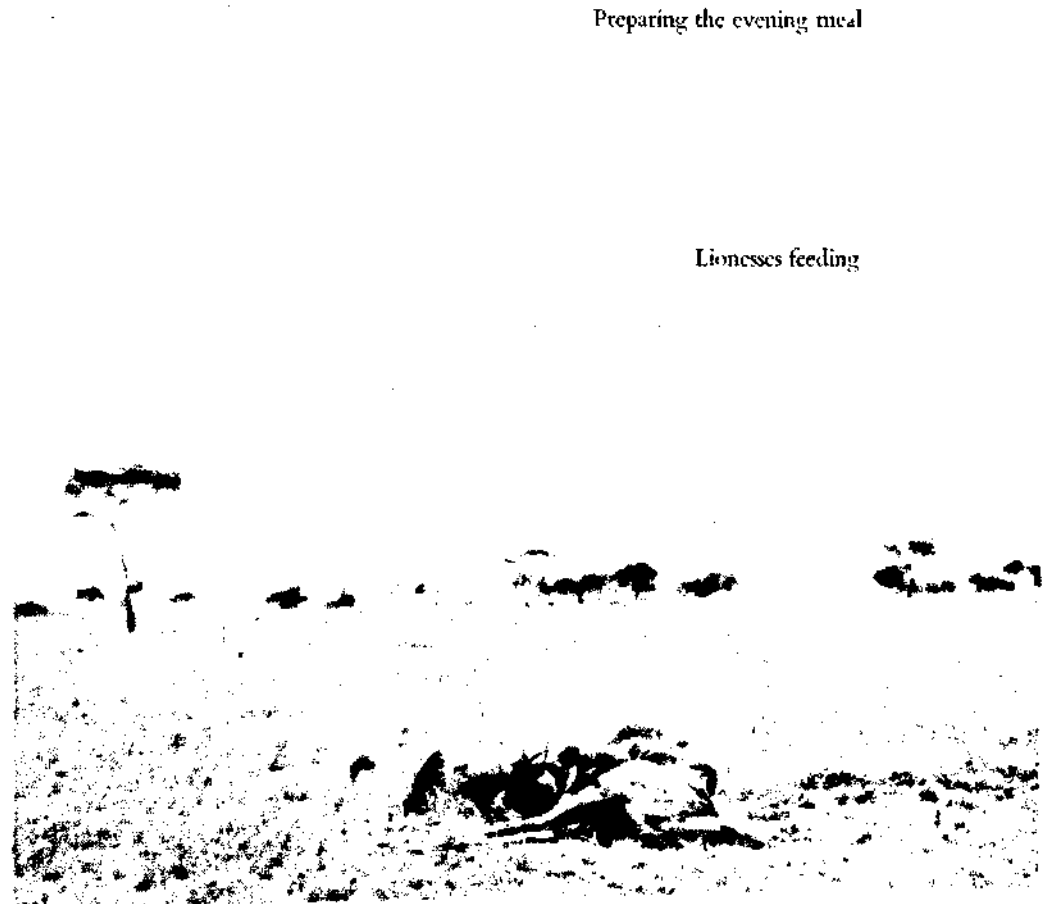
In so far as the operations of my organization were concerned, Nairobi naturally lagged behind my other two Districts because we had only been working there for a short time and because even by June, Norman Coleman the D.M.I.O. had only two F.I.A.s to help him. Another reason for the difficult situation in Nairobi was that methods suited to Kiambu and Thika were not necessarily workable in the city. Coleman therefore had to work out his own ideas or at any rate adapt those previously tried outside Nairobi.

Norman was not only energetic but also extremely adaptable. He was a British officer on a Short Service Commission and not a member of the Kenya Regiment. He was older than anyone else in my organization and had been working as navigator for an airline before joining the army. During the war he had been in the Royal Navy so he had a lot of experience. He got down to work quickly and by June he was getting results. Although informers were the mainstay of his system he soon proved that the pseudo gang principle could be worked in the City.

One of the methods which we developed in Nairobi we used extensively in Kiambu and Thika later. This was the 'Hooded Men' system which I first saw demonstrated by Special Branch officers in Langata Camp at the time of the big operations in Nairobi. I had not liked it then, because of the danger that the men in the hoods might pay off old scores against their enemies, Norman Coleman and his men worked out a way whereby



Preparing the evening meal



Lionesses feeding

this could not happen and by the middle of June I decided that we could well use hooded men as a regular feature of our work.

The Coleman Scheme was to have many more hooded men than Special Branch had used. He wanted at least ten each time and possibly more. Most of the hooded men would be informers and they would each be told to meet a different F.I.A. at a different place before the operation started. The F.I.A. would then disguise the man before he came into contact with the other hooded men, some of whom might be prisoners rather than informers. When they were all safely hidden behind their masks they would be assembled and sat down in a row of chairs, with one of our men standing behind each one. No hooded man was allowed to talk to another.

Each hooded man would know a different section of the Mau Mau but if there were enough of them present it was a safe bet that any genuine terrorist or committee member would be recognized by two or three of them. When all was ready the suspects would walk past the hooded men. If they recognised anyone they would give brief particulars to the F.I.A. standing behind their chair. If a suspect was recognized by three or four of the hooded men and if the particulars given to the F.I.A.s corresponded, then it was a safe assumption that they had picked the right man. In this way we collected a lot of information about people and we also caught many senior Mau Mau supporters. Quite often we would even get active gangsters in the net.

Soon after my contact in Kiambu I got involved in a large scale hooded man operation. I left the house at Kamiti at four o'clock one morning with Eric and an informer of his who we had decided could be useful in a hood. We met Norman Coleman outside the Special Branch office. It was cold and recent rain made the road glisten in the light of the street lamps.

During the next half hour F.I.A.s from all over Nairobi Area arrived, each in his Land-Rover and each with one man completely disguised in a long white robe which covered him from head to foot. Each robe had slits for eyes and mouth.

At five o'clock a force of infantry and police surrounded an area in which we thought a large gang was staying composed of the concentrated strong-arm groups of a number of committees. They then searched the place and directed all the occupants into a barbed-wire pen which they erected in Eastleigh Air Field.

Once the population was in the pen the F.I.A.s sat the hooded men in a row by the exit. As soon as it was light enough to see, the Africans walked



Pseudo gang testing

Pseudo gang posing for propaganda picture



slowly down the line past the hoods. As there were many hundreds of people in the pen the business took some hours. Those unrecognized were sent back to their homes but those picked out were directed into another enclosure for questioning. It was a laborious business and very tiring for the hooded men, especially as the sun came out after a time, making them hot and thirsty.

The operation was very successful. No less than twenty hard-core terrorists were picked out, together with over a hundred passive supporters. Several high-ranking leaders were also captured, including a brigadier. Our only regret was that we had failed to capture the general who commanded all the Kiambu gangsters in Nairobi. We had hoped that he would be there and were disappointed not to find him.

After the operation was over Eric and I started back to Kamiti with our hooded man. We passed out through the gates of the airport and were driving down the long straight street which leads into the centre of the city. At that moment the hooded man touched me on the back and, pointing to a group of Africans walking on the pavement some hundred yards ahead, whispered 'The General'.

Eric put his foot down and as we passed the group swung the Land-Rover up on to the pavement pinning the general against the wall of a house. We jumped out and arrested him. He had been inside the cordon but had avoided being taken to the cages by hiding in a tub. He had waited there until the operation was over and was just walking away when we spotted him. We went home well content with our morning's work.

This was really the culmination of the run of successes which we had produced as a result of our new ideas. On the following Monday we were due to have the conference of all D.M.I.O.s in G.H.Q. at which we would try and sell our methods to the rest of the Colony. In the last few days before the meeting I spent a lot of time with John Holmes preparing the papers.

On Monday, June 21st, the meeting came off. There was some defeatism from one or two areas but for the most part our ideas were well received. John Holmes had produced a paper showing the results which had been achieved in Kiambu and Thika alone in the course of one month using the new methods. It was impressive. At the end John issued another paper signed by the Chief of Staff on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief describing in detail the various ways which we had been using for getting information, including the pseudo gang operations, and expressly desiring Special Branches elsewhere to try them out. John was not keen on ordering M.I.O.s to use particular methods because he well understood

that different circumstances prevailed in each place, so that different methods might be necessary. What he did want was to put pressure on M.I.O.s everywhere to see whether our ideas were suitable for them. This the paper did: it also provided authoritative backing for anyone who was meeting obstruction from other branches of the Security Forces.

One circumstance at this time was worrying me a bit. John Holmes had recently come back to his pet idea of taking me away from Nairobi Area so as to make me direct the training of the F.I.A.s throughout the Colony. This time he was more insistent but I was in a stronger position. My original contention had been that I would never be able to develop new ideas if I had no area of my own in which to try them, and no men of my own to order about. Now I was able to point to the whole business of pseudo gangs which would not have happened at all if I had been taken from my area in March as he had intended.

John had to agree to this point but was not prepared to give up altogether. Eventually he said that I could go on as Provincial M.I.O. of Nairobi Area but that in addition I would have to set up and run a training centre somewhere within my domain to which all the F.I.A.s in the Colony should come for a course. I was to get this started as soon as possible.

I began to work out the details before the M.I.O.s meeting so that we could discuss the subject then. I found a suitable house about two miles from my own camp and decided that I should need two extra F.I.A.s to run the place. One of them would do the instruction and the other would deal with administration.

I thought about the form which the courses should take and decided that there would have to be talks on handling informers, running pseudo gangs, operating hooded men, interrogating prisoners and recording information. I also intended to include a few interest periods on such subjects as the background to the Emergency, building and administering camps and first-aid. In addition to talks, I wanted Eric to take all the students out on a pseudo gang operation if possible and I wanted them all to see a hooded man operation. The methods I should teach were naturally the ones we had developed in Nairobi Area but I realized that F.I.A.s from other districts would have worked out ideas of their own. I was keen to find out about these so decided that as far as possible we should run our periods as discussions.

At the meeting of M.I.O.s it was decided that I should run one course per week, each to be attended by four F.I.A.s. I could have taken more but it was agreed that we could not afford to take more than four away

from their jobs at a time. Now that the affair was settled I was anxious to get on with it at once. The first thing was to write all the lectures and have them typed out. I would have started next day, but my programme was delayed.

I had been working hard ever since my illness in January so that I had never properly recovered. May and June had been particularly exhausting, even though I had more men to help me. Perhaps my hours were more regular than they had been during my first few months in Kenya, but they were still pretty long. I used to ration myself to five hours sleep per day with ten minutes off for lunch and half an hour for dinner. It seems silly in retrospect but there was a lot to do. John Holmes therefore decided to pack me off for a week's leave before I became ill, and I was not sorry. Recently the rain had caused the grass to grow very quickly and the heavy concentration of pollen in the air made me sneeze continuously. This was bad for my asthma and I thought a few days at the coast would be a good remedy.

This time I went by myself, but I stuck to the same routine as before. Goggling, surf-bathing and doubling up and down the beach did a lot to restore my health. I was also able to think about the lectures I would write for the course.

## **INTERLUDE**

A PROBLEM was waiting for me as soon as I got back: Chebere was missing. He had gone out in the afternoon to try and get a line on a gang which was thought to be in the area. With a bit of luck he would discover who was the supporter looking after them so that in the night a pseudo patrol could make contact.

Next morning Chebere was still absent, which was very worrying as he should have been back the evening before. We could not go and look for him as any sort of interest on our part might endanger his life if by some chance he was living with a gang. I went off to visit Nairobi and inform myself as to the events of the past week. Eric and the men held themselves ready at Kamiti to take advantage of anything which Chebere might have discovered.

In the afternoon I arrived at Kiambu to see Walter Gash and heard in the operations room that a gang had killed an African the previous night a short way off. Fearing that it might be Chebere I went round to the morgue to have a look at the body.

Usually when I went to the mortuary it was after an action and the floor would be a tangled mass of bodies caked in mud and blood. This time it was tidy and almost empty. On a table in the corner was the body of a child who had died in the hospital. Lying on the floor nearby was an old woman wrapped in bandages. All of this I took in unconsciously because I was only able to think about the body which was lying in the middle of the floor.

When I first saw it I had felt greatly relieved. It could only belong to a fairly young boy and Chebere was well beyond that. When I looked closer, however, I realized that I was wrong. Death was up to its usual tricks in easing out the creases which give the appearance of age to a face. It was Chebere right enough, horribly mutilated.

I noticed that there had obviously been a chase, as his legs and shorts were splashed with mud. The Mau Mau had ham-strung him on catching him and then cut his throat. Finally his skull had been split open with a panga or similar weapon.

I walked out into the sunlight, temporarily numb with sorrow. Chebere had been one of our original team and we had shared a lot together. This was the first occasion on which anyone from our little group had been killed and it was a very different matter from losing even quite a close friend from elsewhere. I returned to Kamiti wondering how I should break the news to the men, and decided it would be best to pretend that the incident was of no importance and that casualties are the natural result of active service.

I drove up to the house where Eric and the men were sitting around.

'It's no use waiting for Chebere,' I said. 'He's lying in the morgue at Kiambu.' I then shouted to Nganga to bring my tea and hurried off because I did not want to see what the effect was on Eric.

Luckily Africans don't feel very strongly about losing their friends: they are even pretty philosophical about death in their own family. In this case the men had all recovered their normal uproarious spirits within twenty-four hours. My greatest worry in the matter was Eric who, I knew, liked Chebere above all the others. Naturally he showed no sign of anything being out of the usual, but I could guess what it was meaning to him. To make matters worse we could not even take the body and give it a decent burial, because we did not want anyone to know that Chebere had belonged to us. It was one of our private rules that we should never admit to having casualties because of the handle it gave to those people who were constantly trying to stop our operations on the grounds that they were too risky. Chebere was the third man of mine to be killed in this way but the other two had been working with F.I.A.s and had not been living at Kamiti.

I found on my return from leave that the situation had changed slightly in our command organization. Previously, although there had been M.I.O.s at District and Provincial Headquarters, there had been no M.I.O. at the top working in the Special Branch headquarters for the Colony. In practice the Provincial M.I.O.s **had** worked directly under the

senior intelligence staff officer at G.H.Q., John Holmes, whilst the provincial Special Branch officers took their orders from the head Special Branch officer in Nairobi. Now the situation was changed and a soldier had been appointed to work at Special Branch Headquarters with the title of Colony Military Intelligence Officer. The man appointed to the job was John Harrington, an old friend of mine from the same regiment.

Another change had taken place which affected me even more directly. I had been given an extra district to look after in the Masai country called Narok. The area concerned lay miles away to the west of Kiambu on the other side of the Rift Valley and was totally different from any of the other districts for which I was responsible\*

To start with, the country was not cultivated at all but consisted of vast areas of scrubland on which the Masai grazed their cattle, as they wandered up and down the land. These flocks shared the grazing with large herds of deer and other game. Preying on the game were lions and leopards attended by the scavengers of Africa, vultures, hyenas and jackals. The game had the western part of the district to themselves because tsetse fly made it impossible for even the hardy native cattle to live there.

The Masai were not interested in Mau Mau. The Kikuyu were running the movement and the Masai were their hereditary enemies. Unfortunately they had intermarried a lot with the Kikuyu as so many of their own women were barren due to congenital syphilis. From these mixed marriages there grew up a large colony of half-breeds who had forsaken the nomadic life of the proper Masai and who were working in shops and sawmills throughout the area. They had proved to be enthusiastic supporters of the movement and by April several gangs had formed and were doing quite a lot of damage.

Now it is certain that the scale of gangs in Masai country and their remoteness from the main Emergency areas would have been sufficient reason for not deploying part of our limited intelligence resources in the area but for the fear that the gangs might offer a haven to their hard-pressed colleagues in the Aberdares and that they might also be able to subvert the Masai proper if they were not destroyed. To avoid these consequences John Holmes had posted a M.I.O. into the district before Christmas but he had been entirely on his own because there were no F.I.A.s below him, no Special Branch beside him and no Provincial M.I.O. above him.

At the beginning of June, Glen Cottar, who had been working as an F.I. A. in Chura, was also posted into the district to see if he could help. The result of his efforts in the first few weeks had been to discover that the

situation was rather worse than we had thought and to demonstrate that our resources were too scanty to deal with the problem. By the end of the month the situation had deteriorated even further and the decision had been taken to organize our intelligence in the area properly.

I was considered to be the most suitable person to put matters right. First of all Narok was part of Southern Province, the headquarters of which was only fifteen miles south of my own office in Nairobi. Unless a separate provincial M.I.O. was going to be posted, I was the obvious person to use in a secondary role. Secondly, the Narok gangs were closely allied to Kiambu because it was largely Kiambu Kikuyu who had inter-married with the Masai. Finally I had had experience of working with Cottar in the past and John Holmes thought that I was more likely than most to get the best out of this energetic and brilliant though difficult man.

The result was that I found myself appointed Provincial Military Intelligence Officer for Southern Province in a completely separate capacity to my main job which remained the same as before, that is to say the M.I.O. for Nairobi Area. Soon after I took over, the original District M.I.O. in Narok left for a new job and Parry Verlaque took over from him.

I paid my first visit to the area on July 9th, going by air from Nairobi. On this occasion I did no more than visit Narok and have a good talk to Verlaque, after which I went out to the place where Cottar was living to see him.

A week later I again flew into Narok and this time saw a bit more of the land. Glen Cottar had got involved in some sort of action in the extreme south of the district and Verlaque and I went off to see what was going on. Our course took us right across the Loita Plain which is one of the best game areas in the Colony. As we bumped through the scrub we saw many different types of buck. The most common and also the most beautiful in my mind is Thomson's gazelle, a beast of about the same size as a goat but beautifully shaped and upholstered in tawny and white with a black line running down the sides.

In addition to these we saw large herds of zebra and wildebeest—a crazy creature which looks like a buffalo with the legs of a racehorse and an idiotic bearded face. There were also plenty of impala, congoni and a fair number of Grant's gazelle. Though I looked hard all day, I did not see a lion, which was a disappointment. So far I had only seen them outlined against a block of cars and cameras in the Game Park. I wanted to see a real, live wild one, miles away from civilization.

Over the next few months I often went to Narok to see how Verlaque was getting on. Usually I would fly but sometimes I went in a Land-Rover

with Eric and two or three of our men. On these occasions we would have to leave Kamiti in the middle of the night so as to reach Narok in time for breakfast. The trip would take about five hours if the road was in reasonable condition and we would arrive covered in a terrific coating of dust and battered to bits. Even when we arrived at Narok we had often done only half our driving as the district spread out for miles more to the west and Cottar might be anywhere. If we came by road we often stayed for the night lying on camp beds in the grass by the side of the Land Rover.

One of the first people that Verlaque and Cottar had contacted was Major Temple Boreham, the Game Warden. He did an immense amount in getting information as he was very well placed for the purpose. No one else had anything like his detailed knowledge of the country and his game scouts often found tracks or other signs of gangs in the area. Eric and I also called on this man on several occasions and he was always very friendly and helpful. We had taken out a game licence to enable us to shoot the odd buck for the pot when we wanted food, so we were on the right side of the Game Department regarding the law.

The extra commitment of Southern Province had let me in for a lot of additional paper work and meetings to attend, but it was well worth it. The memory of some of the trips we made through that glorious country will stay with me for the rest of my days. There is nothing to equal the feeling of contentment and relaxation that comes over you as you sit round the fire after sunset. At that time we would have eaten our only meal of the day and would be full to the point of bursting with fresh meat. We would sit close round the glowing logs because, due to the altitude, the temperature dropped quickly once the sun had gone. Eric and I would sit on the side from which the wind came trying to avoid the smoke. Close up to us would be two or three Africans from Eric's team chattering away quietly amongst themselves or to Eric.

As the fire died down, the animals, which always seemed to close in on these camps in the hopes of finding food, would approach nearer and nearer to the centre, picking up bones or bits of fat or gristle that we had thrown away. All we could see were their shining eyes as they came into the light from the fire, but we could hear them as they sniffed around and occasionally got angry at each other. I don't know what these creatures were but I imagine that usually they were jackals and hyenas. Once we saw a leopard for a moment as the beam of a torch shone on to a particularly brilliant pair of eyes.

After a time we would get tired of talking and drift away to our beds



which would be huddled round the embers. Then, half way between waking and sleeping, we would look up at the brilliantly star-studded sky and listen to the animals grunting around in the darkness. As time went on I learned from Eric to distinguish the various beasts by their calls. I was most surprised by the lions which seldom roar but make instead a sort of muttering cough which is most distinctive.

One morning we had got up from just such a camp as this and had loaded up the Land-Rover. We had so much kit that we travelled with the roof off. At the bottom of the pile in the back was the bedding and blankets, then on top of that were the boxes of food and other heavy stuff. Wedged on top of that again were the weapons and the more fragile articles, such as the pressure lamp which we normally took with us. Perched on top of the whole lot were two of our Africans with a third in the middle seat in front.

We had been driving across the open plain in an area where there were few tracks. We were just on the edge of the tsetse fly belt, so the country was clear of everything except game and Mau Mau. We had just had a halt to take off our overcoats, which we always wore in the early morning, and were about to start up again, when one of the Africans whispered 'Simba'. We looked up and saw two lions about fifty yards away in the long grass. They were sitting down and only their heads and shoulders were visible. Even so, I was very excited.

Eric had often seen lions before and so had one of our Africans who had formerly worked for a white hunter. The other two and I had not. We stopped the Land-Rover and watched through our binoculars. Soon one of the beasts walked slowly across in our direction and we saw that it was an immature lion. The other was a lioness. The Hon came to within twenty yards of the car and then stood still. After a time we moved slowly forward and the lion followed.

By this time the three of us who were unaccustomed to the situation were getting just a little nervous. Kimani particularly seemed worried and kept saying over and over again the word Simba which means lion and which he pronounced 'Chimba'. Kimani was clearly agitated. After a time the lion turned round and walked off, which caused me to look behind the Land-Rover. There I saw stretching across the plain a trail of little bits of newspaper. On investigating the matter we discovered that Kimani had been throwing it overboard in the hopes of delaying the lion's follow up!

On several occasions we saw lions in Narok. Once we shot a congoni and withdrew to a distance of several hundred yards. Soon there were

four or five lionesses on the kill and we returned to watch them close tip. By driving round very slowly in ever decreasing circles we eventually got to within eight yards of the pride. It was a wonderful sight to see them from such close range, with the blood on their whiskers. The grunts and snarls with which they punctuated their meal were fascinating to hear. Every now and again one of the ladies would lose her temper and let out a noise which sounded like a train starting up. On these occasions Kimani or I would start to duck into the Land-Rover before realizing that the dispute was of a domestic nature. I took some pictures with my box-camera and, amazing to say, they came out.

As we got nearer it was obvious that some of the less tolerant members of the dining club were beginning to resent our presence. They demonstrated their displeasure by curving the end of their tails upwards and by baring their teeth in our direction. When we thought we had seen enough we gently drove away.

On other occasions in Narok District we saw cheetah, rhino and one or two vast herds of buffalo. The only time I had seen buffalo before was when we had met them whilst on patrol. That time I had not had a chance to watch them very carefully. In Narok we would sometimes get to within one hundred and fifty yards, which was a suitable range at which to observe their habits through binoculars. A buffalo is like a battleship in its massive power and watching them is an unforgettable experience. Many hunters regard them as the most dangerous of all the big game animals and certainly only one creature has ever frightened me as much as the buffalo I met that night.

One evening we had shot an impala shortly before going into camp for the night. It was too late to skin it by daylight so we decided to keep it until next morning. We had both heard stories of lion coming right into camps despite fires and taking game but I had taken these tales with a pinch of salt. All the same we didn't want to have our impala stolen, so we put it down between Eric's and my camp beds. We hung the pressure lamp over it in a forked stick.

We turned in at about half past ten as usual and were soon sound asleep. I woke up for no apparent reason during the night but not with a start as one does when disturbed by a noise. I remember thinking that it could not be very late as the pressure lamp was still going strong, and I wondered what had woken me up. Then I saw what I had been looking straight at ever since I had opened my eyes. A leopard was standing six feet away from my bed immediately under the pressure lamp straddling the impala.

The reality of the situation did not strike sharply as though a pin had

gone into my arm. It bore down on me gradually as though a vast weight had been pressed on to my chest over a period of half a second. Once the realization was fully there I could not move a muscle or blink or utter a sound. I lay stilled by fright looking straight at one of the most dangerous animals in Africa from a range of two yards. The leopard looked back at me for a moment before dropping down over the carcass and rasping its tongue up and down the ribs inside the impala through the hole we had made when cleaning it.

Beauty and terror mix well, and if there was one aspect of the situation which stood out more strongly than any other it was the amazing beauty of the leopard. I could see the muscles moving under the skin as the beast moved its head and neck to get further into its meal. Under the strong light from the lamp I could see every variation of colour, from the black blobs and the tawny gold of the leopard's coat to the redder colour of the impala and the patch of white round its tail. In addition I could hear the breathing and snuffling from inside the body, followed by the crunching noise as the leopard started to eat through to the flesh from the inside.

From the first moment when I had been able to think at all after the shock, I prayed that the leopard would go away; at the same time I soaked up every detail of the scene and longed for it to go on. Providence fortunately dealt with the matter in a satisfactory way by arranging for the leopard to move off after about ten minutes. First he dragged the impala two or three yards away from the light and ate some more meat. After a further delay he pulled it into thick bush about ten yards further off. For the first time I dared to move my head enough to see what was going on elsewhere in the camp.

Our Africans were sleeping by the Land-Rover some way off and had not even woken up. Eric had been even nearer than I had. Next morning we measured the distance carefully and found that the leopard had been within four feet of his bed. Eric had been woken up by the crunching of fang on bone but could not see what was causing the noise without turning his head. He thought it was a lion and wisely kept perfectly still. His ordeal had therefore been more severe than mine because he had not been able to appreciate the sight. On the other hand his nerve was better and he had probably suffered less from fright. All the same, once the leopard had gone he lit up a King Stork cigarette and puffed away with evident gusto. To enjoy a 'Ndege' (bird) in normal times indicated a perverted sense of taste; to enjoy one at three o'clock in the morning must have meant that the nervous system had been under more than average strain.

We had many interesting interludes whilst driving round Narok but fortunately nothing as exciting as the leopard incident happened again. I always looked forward to our expeditions in this part of the Colony and perhaps they did some good. All the same, Southern Province was a side show as far as I was concerned and I could never spare more than one or two days away from the scene of my normal business.

*Chapter Nine*

## THE NEW LOOK

At first the situation was chaotic. The gangs took advantage of their freedom and strength to make their own policy which in most cases meant that they roamed around raiding labour lines and murdering loyalists. Though the gangs maintained contact with the committees they did not take much notice of them. Then the Security Forces began to contact the new gangs and gradually forced them out of their own areas of the Reserve into the western part of the district where the forest and lightly inhabited bush country offered them a better chance of avoiding action.

After a while a new supreme committee for Kiambu got together to co-ordinate the activities of the divisional committees. For some reason it called itself the Maguga Council of Elders. We were thoroughly mystified by this at first because Maguga is the name of a small area in Chura and for a long time we thought the Council was a body subordinate to the Chura District Committee.

While all this was going on Dedan Kimathi sent an emissary to the Maguga Council to try to persuade them to bring Kiambu into his Aberdare domain. Kiambu declined and Kimathi's ambassador was killed by the Security Forces shortly afterwards.

By the middle of July therefore, Kiambu was operating once more from a Mau Mau point of view as a District with a supreme Council controlling subordinate committees in the Divisions who in turn controlled other committees in the locations. Several medium sized gangs existed down the western side of the District each of which owed some -sort of allegiance to a committee but which in practice carried out offensive operations against the loyal population very much as they liked. These gang attacks were in fact not very serious affairs. Though we did not know it at the time Waruingi Kurier was in prison under an assumed name. Had he been in the field against us we would have had a far rougher time.

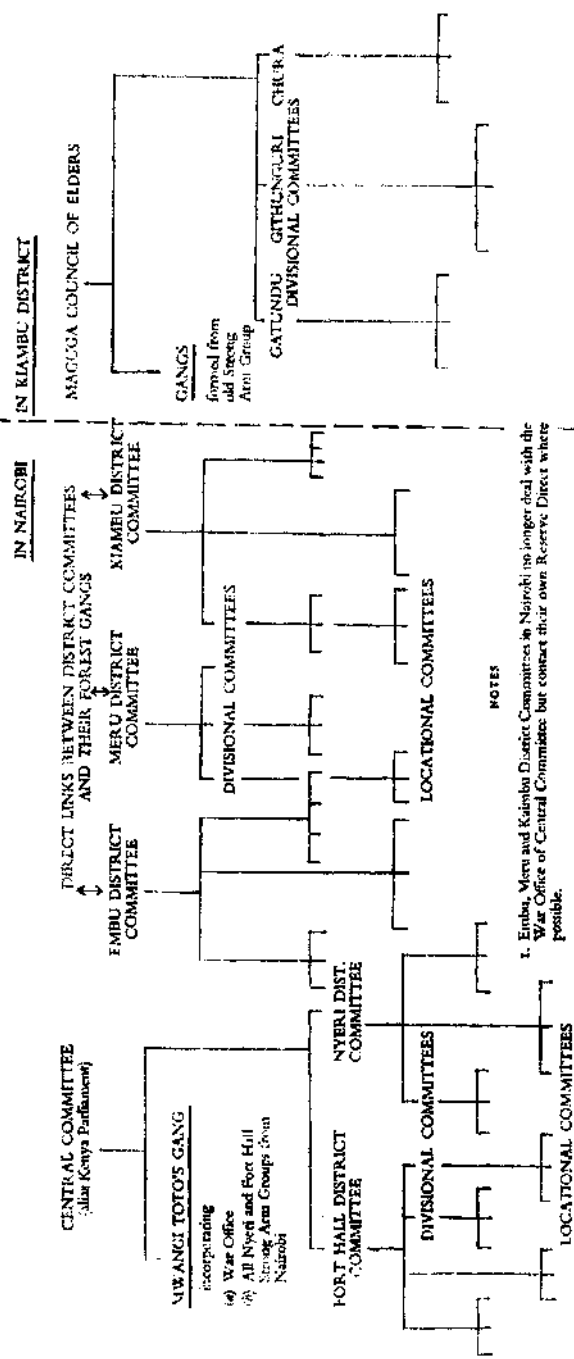
In Nairobi itself the situation had changed just as drastically as it had in Kiambu. At the beginning of the big operation the committees had taken a severe knock but by the middle of July they had mostly reformed, though few of the old and experienced members had survived. The new people on the Central Committee and the War Office were, for example, the men who had previously been the old Central Committee's messengers and Strong Arm group: the Praetorian Guard had seized power. The new Commander-in-Chief had previously been no more than the colonel commanding this group. On becoming Commander-in-Chief he had promoted himself to general, renamed the Central Committee the Kenya

BY the middle of July the big operation which had started in Nairobi in April and then continued in the neighbouring parts of the Settled Area had come to an end. The Security Forces had arrested thousands of Mau Mau supporters and the whole pattern of events had altered. The Nairobi Kiambu base from which the Mau Mau movement had drawn most of its money, and the forest gangs most of their arms and recruits, had ceased to exist.

As the dust, kicked up by the big operation, settled, two things became clear. First, the policy of non-violence had gone. Second, there was no longer any overall control of the base area as a whole: Kiambu District had ceased to take orders from Nairobi.

Kiambu had broken away from Nairobi at the start of the operation because the Security Forces were physically preventing the District Committee which lived in the city from contacting the divisional committees in the Reserve. For a time the committees in the Reserve continued to collect money, arms and ammunition as before but they could not pass them on to Nairobi. Furthermore no policy direction was coming down from the District Committee. This gave the hotheads a chance, and many of the Strong Arm groups attached to the committees in the Reserve banded together to form gangs. The committees managed to maintain some control over these gangs because they supplied them with the money and arms which they had formerly been collecting to send to Nairobi.

MAU MAU ORGANIZATION IN NAIROBI AREA JULY 1954



**NOTES**

1. Embu, Meru and Kiambu District Committees in Nairobi no longer deal with the War Office of Central Committee but contact their own Reserve Direct where possible.
2. This Chart has been oversimplified.



Oathing ceremony



The ammunition oath



George Hales and  
John Stanfield



Wambogo

Parliament, and made himself chairman. The name of this enterprising and ambitious man was Mwangi Toto.

Mwangi Toto was a Fort Hall man and a very tough nut. It soon became apparent that he was going to be the leading spirit of the movement in Nairobi. He was young, exceedingly aggressive and soon tired of life as a committee member. He had taken on a job which, for all its grand title, amounted to organizing supplies for the forest, but this was not suited to his temperament. He therefore gathered together the Strong Arm group of all the Fort Hall committees in Nairobi and formed a gang. It was certainly the strangest gang we ever dealt with because it included the War Office staff complete. Furthermore the Central Committee or Kenya Parliament lived with the gang and even took part in its battles. After one skirmish we started talking to a prisoner who turned out to be the Hon. Member of Parliament for the Coast Province which was a change for us: we had often found ourselves interrogating brigadiers or colonels dressed as rag-and-bone men but this was our first experience of an M.P.

Mwangi Toto's gang was supplied with money and equipment collected by the Fort Hall committees in Nairobi. Later on all the Nyeri Strong Arm groups joined his gang as well, and their committees made their contribution to its upkeep. From the long term point of view Mwangi Toto did the Mau Mau a grave disservice. Our operations in and around Nairobi had been designed to break up the main base and prevent supplies going to the Forest Gangs. For the first month or two we had been completely successful but by the beginning of July the chain was virtually re-established. Had Mwangi Toto not formed his own gang, supplies would once more have started to reach Kimathi's men in Nyeri and Fort Hall. As it was Mwangi Toto misappropriated these supplies for his own use.

Another effect of Mwangi Toto's action was to take away the body which was supposed to co-ordinate the work of all the communities in Nairobi, i.e. the Central Committee, and the body which was supposed to organize the mechanics of supply, i.e. the War Office. Thus not only did he misappropriate all the supplies destined for Fort Hall and Nyeri, but he also left the other communities in Nairobi, such as the Embu and Meru people, without the machinery for passing on what they had collected.

All these facts were only vaguely understood by us in July. What we were far more concerned about were the activities of Mwangi Toto's gang. This was about one hundred strong, it was far better armed and

equipped than any other gang that ever appeared in the Colony because it had taken for its own use all the resources of the Fort Hall and Nyeri communities in Nairobi which were formerly deemed adequate to support about two thousand forest terrorists. We soon began to experience what this meant. Early in July the gang left the city and moved into the Settled Area of Kiambu. Mwangi Toto was about to demonstrate his prowess as a warrior, supreme commander, patriot, statesman and leader.

Soon there were incidents almost every night. Usually the gang attacked an African labour lines and killed some of the workers there. Sometimes they laid ambushes for people returning home late at night. On other occasions there would be skirmishes with police patrols. Gradually we built up a picture of their methods and started to find out who the gang members were. As we caught glimpses of him from eye witness accounts, Mwangi Toto himself began to come to life as a personality instead of a name. He appeared to be ruthless, cruel and aggressive, with little humour. One man described him jumping around in a scene of lurid butchery shouting *Tanya kasi, fanya kasi* ('Do your work') as his men chopped up a family of children caught in one of his raids.

On July 17th Peter Dempster gave a farewell party for the outgoing District Commissioner, Tony Swaun. He had been in Kiambu long before my arrival and had supervised all my early efforts in his capacity as Chairman of the Kiambu District Emergency Committee. We were very sorry indeed that he was going even though he had been promoted. All the same we contrived to enjoy the party.

At about half-past-nine the hubbub in the house reached its peak. The Superintendent of Police had just sung the last verse of 'Allouetta' in his vast voice and the rest of the party were singing the chorus whilst he dipped his great moustache into a pint of beer. About three miles away the labourers on a coffee farm were sitting quietly in their huts round the glowing remains of their cooking fires. Across a shallow valley Mwangi Toto and his gang were wriggling through the bush to take up a good position for attack.

A moment or two later the peaceful scene round the labour lines dissolved into a whirlpool of horror. Mwangi's men charged shouting at the top of their voices. Several blew whistles and a bugle blared out in imitation of the great Kago's battles. The wretched labourers, whose only fault was that they were working for a European, ran out of their huts into the maize screaming with terror. The gang, frenzied by the thought of blood, slashed around with their simis and fired their guns. One old

man, slower than the rest, was caught and hamstrung. He fell at the feet of his pursuers, covering his face with his arms to protect it from the slicing swords, but a mouse in a mechanical mincing machine would have had a better chance of survival. One terrorist hacked off a foot, and another sliced off his testicles to use later in an oathing ceremony. A third gouged out his eyes with a staple and put them in his pocket for the same purpose. When they had finished, most of the gang came by to cut and stab the twitching corpse. They then licked the blood off their simis and moved off into the night, having first set fire to all the huts they could see.

As soon as the Mau Mau made their charge a nearby European sent up an alarm rocket and rang up the police in Kiambu. The stand-by force was out of the police station in a minute and racing to the relief of the victims. A messenger came to the party to tell us what was happening.

Eric and I dashed out to our Land-Rover and drove as fast as we could to the spot. When we arrived the place was almost deserted, as the police had already set off in pursuit of the gang. The area was brilliantly lit by the burning huts and Eric and I went off in opposite directions to see what we could find.

The first thing I ran into was the body of the old man. The ground around squelched under foot as though there had been heavy rain, and some of the blood got inside my shoe through the lace holes. I bent over the corpse to look at the injuries. Each gang had its own way of butchering its victims and I had learnt to identify them by their handiwork. It did not take me long to recognize the craftsmanship of Fort Hall and that, near Limuru, could only mean Mwangi Toto.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that there weren't more bodies lying around. The next job was to persuade the terrified Africans that the gang had gone and that it was safe to emerge from their hiding places. I walked around shouting 'Mimi Bwana. Cuja Lads,' that is to say, 'I'm a white man, come out lads.'

Soon they began to reappear. Several had been chipped but only six seriously. One had his right hand almost severed and was bleeding profusely: I tied my handkerchief round the artery and tightened the knot with a stick. Another had a wide cut across his face between the nose and upper lip, which gave the macabre impression of a second mouth.

By far the most interesting case was a little girl of about eight who had received a cut on the right side of her head above the ear. Had the weapon gone a fraction of an inch deeper, it would have ploughed up her brain. Had it gone a fraction finer it would have missed the head and probably come to rest in the girl's shoulder or at worst taken off the ear. As it was

it had neatly sliced a flap of scalp and skull away from the head and this was hanging over her ear so that the brain itself was visible. I did not think there was much chance of her living but I anchored the flap into position with my tie and took her with the rest of the wounded to Kiambu hospital. Some days later she was still alive, which was considered to be a miracle by the doctor. Her ultimate fate is unknown to me.

The gang, of course, got clean away, which always happened at night, but we had some pretty good information on them, and they were often in contact with the Security Forces. A day or two later they ambushed and badly wounded two European K.P.R. officers in the same area.

The day after the ambush I was in the wireless room at Kiambu. As I looked out of the window I saw a squad of policemen drilling on the open ground beyond. This was not unusual except for the fact that most of the drill was done in the morning and it was then the middle of the afternoon. I was also puzzled by the fact that they were practising the slow march and 'Rest on your arms reversed'. After a while I turned round and asked the lady in charge of the operations room what they were doing.

'They're practising for the funeral,' she said.

'What funeral is that?' I asked.

'The two K.P.R. men shot last night.'

'Good heavens,' I said, 'I never realized they'd died.'

'They haven't yet,' was her next remark, 'but once they do there won't be much time to practise before they are buried.'

In the end they recovered so that solemn little exercise was unnecessary, but it brought home the fact that funerals follow death with indecent haste in tropical climates. I have often wondered if the objects of all this preparation realized how much trouble was taken to ensure that they had a good send off.

At the beginning of August there were two main centres of activity in my area as a result of the new Mau Mau organization. First there was the country in which Mwangi Toto was operating, that is to say the Settled Area between Nairobi and Limuru. Mwangi Toto was opposed mostly by British troops and policemen. Secondly there was the area down the west edge of the District where the Kiambu gangs were living. I Company of the Kenya Regiment had been sent to the District to help break up these gangs.

I had always realized that the Kenya Regiment must be better than any other unit of the Security Forces for this sort of war because all their men were potential officers and spoke Swahili as well as the Africans them-

selves. Even so I was amazed to see how quickly they came to grips with the gangs and how thoroughly they controlled their area.

I suppose the real explanation of their success in the Emergency lay in the very strong bonds of loyalty that bound one member of the Regiment to another. This in turn was due to the fact that nearly every member of the Regiment had been to the same school, the only big school that existed in Kenya before the Emergency. This school was the Prince of Wales' and after leaving the boys became 'Old Cambrians'. The Old Cambrian Society and the Kenya Regiment were, in 1954, very nearly one and the same.

Another important reason for their success was that the Kenya Regiment provided—on secondment—all the Kikuyu Guard officers, a number of junior police officers, many of the platoon commanders and sergeants in the King's African Rifles, and all the F.I.A.s. In other words most of the 'field' jobs in all branches of the Security Forces were filled by people who knew each other well. Between British and Kenya officers in the police or army there might be strong bonds of respect, discipline or service: on the other hand there might not. Between a Kenya man in the police and a Kenya F.I. A. or soldier there was an unbreakable bond of brotherhood.

I must say I was very glad that the D.M.I.O. of Kiambu—Walter Gash—was himself a Kenya Regiment man, because it made co-operation between our two organizations much easier. I was always honoured by the fact that I Company did not let the tyres of my Land-Rover down when I visited them and as a matter of fact the Regiment were extremely good about taking me into their confidence. All the same I did not belong in their circle and had to be content with the fact that they regarded me as a useful ally rather than a feeble-minded obstructionist.

One day I asked Denis Kearney how it was that my vehicle remained unmolested when I called. I hoped that he would say something nice about my relationship with Kenya men but all he said was that the sentry—whose duty evidently it was to see that no undesirables would want to pay a second visit—must have been drunk.

Soon after I Company of the Kenya Regiment arrived in our area we discovered that one of their platoon commanders called Francis Erskine was using pseudo gangs systematically as an offensive weapon. We had always used it primarily as a means of getting information though we had frequently killed or captured Mau Mau when the prize seemed worth it. Francis was soon getting successes by this means all over the southern half of the District.

In fact his entry into the pseudo gang field, posed a lot of problems for us. He, of course, was doing it entirely on a military basis and was outside our authority. In theory his operations were a bad thing from our point of view. The idea was much more likely to leak out from him, because he did not wait until he was certain of killing or capturing all the enemy before declaring himself. Also he was compromising the idea for the sake of killing unimportant gang members instead of restricting himself to the leaders. In theory we in Special Branch were nervous of his activities.

In practice, on the other hand, I had few misgivings. Erskine was killing terrorists. That was something good. What is more, he was killing lots of them and the long and short term value of such action was beyond question excellent. Finally there was very little that I could do even had I wanted things to be different. The Kenya Regiment were not going to take any notice of me, any more than they would of the Commissioner of Police, the C.I.D. or the Mufti of Jerusalem for that matter. Furthermore, all my F.I.A.s were Kenya Regiment and Old Cambrians themselves and thus predisposed to co-operate. (Funnily enough Francis Erskine was an Old Etonian and not an Old Cambrian.) I decided to do what I could to help the Kenya Regiment pseudo gangs by passing on the lessons we had learnt and lending them ex-terrorists who had been doing the work with us. In return they kept us supplied with information and lent us some of their ex-terrorists. Soon Francis Erskine was a regular caller at Kamiti and Walter Gash and myself were frequent visitors to I Company of the Kenya Regiment. My very last misgivings were dispelled when I heard that Stan Bleazard was Francis Erskine's second-in-command. He was one of Eric's great friends and a man whom I personally liked and admired immensely. Looking back now on all that Erskine and Bleazard achieved I am extremely thankful that I decided to co-operate rather than compete with them. I believe it is true to say that we shared in each other's successes.

## THE OATH

**AUGUST** 1954 was a hideously active month and one in which the population of Kiambu District suffered heavily. In one week alone Mwangi Toto's gang killed seventeen loyalists. Soon afterwards, on August 19th, no less than eight separate Mau Mau-inspired incidents took place: the casualties included the European manager of a golf club killed and two cars destroyed.

In Thika District things were going better from our point of view, because Bill Henning and his men had succeeded in destroying both the northern and southern gangs as a result of the series of contacts which had taken place in May, June and July. Throughout this time Henning's main helper was Jacky Miller whose good work was officially recognized when he was made a sergeant major. The only other F.I.A. in my organization with that distinction was Eric Holyoak. Sergeant Major Miller, J.—it sounded imposing but the title did not quite seem to fit the eager blue eyes, long lashes, snub nose and fair hair, so the other F.I.A.s called him the 'Gen Kiddy'.

Fort Hall was also much more peaceful by August though there were still a number of large gangs left in the forest there. One of these carried out a raid across the Kiambu border early in the month which had far-reaching consequences for me because a member of the gang fell into the hands of the F.I.A. and was delivered to us at Kamiti for interrogation.

I happened to be at home when the prisoner arrived. He was terribly



thin and his hair hung in the long plaits of the hard-core forest terrorist. He had evidently been in the bush for some time as his legs were covered with sores and he smelt frightful. He was scared stiff and his eyes kept flicking from side to side like a wild animal. I had never seen anyone in such a state before. It was only just possible to recognize him as a human being and yet I had a strange feeling that I knew the man. I tried to work out when I could have seen him but I could not place him at all. He was, however, such a strange sight that I went and took a photograph of him before Eric's men led him away.

He was not much use to us as far as his interrogation was concerned because he had never been to Kiambu before the raid on which he was captured. He had been a corporal in the Fort Hall gang which operated in the forest off the extreme northern part of that District. I sent a copy of his interrogation report to Ian Feild of Fort Hall but it wasn't much use to him either. After a day or two we had finished with the man and should, by rights, have passed him over to the police for a detention order to be raised against him. From the circumstances of his capture there was no possibility of a case at law.

Luckily I decided not to do this. We badly needed a Fort Hall gangster in our team as we were short of information on their ways, and for that reason he might be worth keeping. Another reason for keeping him was that he looked the part of the forest terrorist with his long hair and jungle sores. Finally I still had a strong feeling of having known him before. After a week, though very nervous, he was becoming used to the ways of hut dwellers again, and we let him off his chain for short periods so that he could help in washing the dishes and cleaning the camp.

Very gradually he began to put on weight and lose his hunted look. Our men called him Matenjagua, which means 'long haired'. I spent a good deal of time talking to him and quickly learnt his history, which was typical of so many others. He had been born on a European farm in the Rift Valley where his father worked for the farmer. He had spent most of his life on the farm but had also been employed for a time as a carpenter. When the Emergency started he had returned with his parents to Fort Hall when all the Kikuyu in the area had been thrown back to the land of their forebears. On arrival they found little land, no one to support them, and not much to do. The whole of the neighbourhood, which was near the forest edge, was under Mau Mau influence, and local passive wing members made contact. Matenjagua had received the first oath before the Emergency started in Nakuru. Now he was given another one and sent to join his locational gang.

At first his life in the forest had not been too bad. At twenty-three he had been older than many and had soon risen to be an N.C.O. There was no shortage of food and the camps in which the main Fort Hall gangs lived were not uncomfortable. For the first six months at any rate, he enjoyed himself. Later on the pace became rather hot. Every now and then his gang would go off on raids into the Reserve but they spent most of the time deep in the forest, collecting honey or singing songs. Sometimes there would be big meetings when other gangs came to join them. Sometimes a senior Fort Hall leader, such as Kago, would arrive on a tour of inspection. Once Dedan Kimathi himself spent a night with them. On these occasions there would be more oaths administered and Matenjagua enjoyed such functions. He was not bothered by the oath much, and he took at least two more during his time in the forest. The great thing about oathing was that there would usually be a big feast afterwards.

After Christmas the situation had begun to get worse. It was more difficult to get food from the supporters in the Reserves because the Administration and Kikuyu Guard were getting a grip on the population. All the same, the gangsters were not really hungry until the advent of the long rains in April. After that there was very little food to be found in the fields and, to make matters worse, it became cold and wet in the forest. Matenjagua became more and more hungry as the months went by. He and his friends also started to suffer from lack of other supplies which had formerly come from the local passive wing or Nairobi. Their clothes were in rags, their ammunition was short, recruits stopped coming in and there was less and less money.

In August the gang leader decided to make a quick raid across the Fort Hall border in the hope that the local Security Forces would not realize where they had come from and thus be unable to follow them back. During the raid the gang was broken up by a charge from the Kikuyu Guard and Matenjagua found himself on his own. Soon afterwards he was captured by the local F.I.A.

One thing we all felt about Matenjagua was that you could not help liking him. He did not boast of his exploits like most captured terrorists, once their fear had worn off; on the contrary he was quiet and always willing to help. He had a great sense of humour and was amazingly kind. He gave the impression that he could be trusted completely and in a very short time he became one of our team. He was particularly useful to me because he seemed to be able to understand my terrible Swahili which none of the others could. I soon adopted him as my personal bodyguard and attendant and took him with me wherever I went.

The whole question of whom to select for operations in pseudo gangs had been one to which we had given a lot of thought. Obviously the main job was to keep up-to-date with the ways of the gangsters, which meant having somebody from each of the major gangs and replacing them from time to time. Thus if we had just recruited somebody from one gang we would prefer the next man to come from a different enemy group. In this way the field of terrorists from whom we could select was narrowed a good deal.

The next question was what sort of terrorist was suitable for recruitment. It is only possible to answer that by indulging in a gross oversimplification and by dividing them into clearly defined types, which was not always possible in practice. On the whole it was best to rule out people who had joined the Mau Mau because they were fanatically keen on the movement politically. There were very few of these but when we did meet one the only thing to do was to give him away as soon as possible.

There was a far bigger group who, like Matenjagua, had merely joined because all their friends had done so and because life was getting rough in the Reserve. Many of these surrendered when things got difficult in the forest and such people could often be used. On the whole, however, they were rather feeble and with certain exceptions were not good people for the job. By far the best were the Africans who joined the gangs from a spirit of adventure: such a one was James. Tired of their drab lives on farms or in the Reserves, they thought that it would be fun to be a gangster and carry a pistol and kill their acquaintances. Their outlook was not far from that of many young men of spirit anywhere else in the world and they were the easiest to handle because they were the easiest to satisfy. But as I have said it was not easy to look at a new prisoner and say, 'He's in category three, let's keep him'. In practice Eric would make up his mind over a period of several days while interrogating a prisoner. No doubt he was influenced to a great extent by the opinions of the older members of the team who would be able to judge from the man's normal behaviour and possibly even from past acquaintance, probably as members of the same gang.

Training—or taming as we called it—took place in three phases. When a new prisoner first arrived he would be treated harshly. We would chain him up, feed him on posho and little else and make him realize that he was not such a wonderful hero as he supposed. During this stage he would be primarily concerned in telling his story, and we would be involved in seeing whether he was worth trying in the job.

During stage two the candidate would be gradually incorporated into

the community as a friend but would not be told much about the business, nor would he be left by himself. To start with he would just be let off his chain and taken under guard to help wash the men's dishes or dig a slit trench. Gradually he would be allowed more freedom until he could walk around inside the perimeter as he pleased. Eventually if we were sure that he was going to be satisfactory he would start on stage three.

From the beginning of stage three it was essential that the man should feel that he was trusted. Once he had joined us there were no reservations. He could sleep with the others, carry arms, do sentry duty or go out by himself. Frequently on one of his first patrols Eric or I would give him our pistol and carry only a simi to make him realize that he was absolutely one of the team.

As time went on we got to know more and more about each of the terrorists in the gangs so that if and when they were captured we would already know almost enough to enable us to judge whether they would be suitable or not. In some cases we were able to cut out stage one altogether and reduce stage two to a very short time. In the end we could occasionally do the whole thing within twenty-four hours if necessary. The penalty for making a mistake would undoubtedly be serious but the system was virtually foolproof. Any African could fool me no doubt: one or two could probably have got round Eric, but he would have to be very clever to pass the scrutiny of the other Africans in our teams, some of whom were loyalists, some of whom were ex-terrorists, and all of whom had a vital interest in making sure that there was no mistake. Certainly we never went wrong at Kamiti and in the whole of my area there were only one or two miscalculations.

By the end of August, I had been living with Eric for nine months and had learnt from him a terrific lot about Kenya and Africans. During the five months since the Special Methods Training Centre had been built just behind the kitchen, I had also gained a lot of first-hand experience about these people. As a result my outlook had changed a great deal. When I first arrived in the Colony I had thought of Kenya merely as a bit of the Empire and an adjunct of England. Now Kenya seemed to me to be a real country in its own right existing for its own good rather than for England's glory and regarding its position in the Empire not as the main reason for its existence, but in much the same way as we in England regard our position in the United Nations: similarly with the Africans themselves. To start with I had thought of them only as strange coloured people who either tried to further the plans of their white masters—good Africans—or who tried to oppose them—bad Africans. Now I saw the

Africans as a people with their own interests who were far more likely to be thinking about their relationships with each other than with white men.

Returning to my original analogy of the picture, I might say that the light had moved so that I could see a lot more of the canvas. My view was no longer limited to the Security Forces or Kenya Europeans, and now that I could see more I was able to tackle those vague fears that had formerly assailed me with regard to those unseen evils which I visualized welling up from the depths of ancient Africa.

In fact one of the biggest problems I had to face was to work out my attitude to the prevailing atmosphere of superstition, cruelty, obscenity and magic. Everyone connected with the Emergency had to do this in his own way but it was obviously more important for those of us who had to live and work with men who had at some stage abandoned themselves to acts of the most disgusting and apparently frightful kind. I was often asked how I could possibly live in close contact with such people, how I could trust myself to their care on patrol, feed with them, talk to them, play games with them and finally on occasions roll up with them under a blanket or greatcoat and sleep peacefully through the night. I do not know how other people worked this out. Ultimately the whole subject stemmed from the Mau Mau oath and it is necessary for me to go into this matter with some care in order to throw light on a problem which greatly exercised both European and African.

The taking of oaths has always been part of the Kikuyu tribal life. If two parties are disputing a problem, the veracity of one man's contention can be tested by asking him to repeat it on oath. Providing the oath is administered in such a way as to persuade the person taking it that he will suffer by supernatural power if he lies, he will either tell the truth or keep silent.

The oath therefore consists of two parts. First there are various magic actions designed to convince the person taking it that he is invoking a supernatural power which will quite certainly take action on any violation of the oath sworn. By tribal custom certain acts are used to invoke this supernatural power and some of these actions invoke a stronger power than others. It is also known that certain other actions will invoke supernatural power but that these actions are not allowed within the tribal law. I don't know exactly what is allowed and what is not, nor do I know why certain means of invoking supernatural power are not allowed, but it is so: perhaps they invoke the wrong sort of power. The sort of ways that are allowed by tribal custom concern killing animals and monkeying around with entrails or touching sacred objects such as the vertebra of an elephant.

Sexual perversion is taboo in this as in all other contexts so far as the Kikuyu tribe is concerned.

The second part of the oath concerns what it is that is being said. For example the person taking the oath may be swearing that he did not steal someone's goat or he may be undertaking to do a specific job. In each case he is invoking the supernatural power to support his assertion by striking him down should he be lying or should he fail to carry out the task he has set himself. In this way he demonstrates to his friends that he is telling the truth or intending to carry out his obligation as the case may be. No one would invoke the supernatural powers unless they were sure of being in the right. No one, that is, who believes in the magic efficiency of the tribal oath.

So much for the background. In 1952 most of the Kikuyu tribe believed implicitly in the power of the oath. The leaders of the Mau Mau thus had the means to tie all their followers together into a community by binding them with the supernatural power of an oath. By regulating the wording of the oath they could provide for all contingencies. They could ensure secrecy, obedience, unity and mutual assistance.

It would be reasonable to suppose that such an achievement would have satisfied the leaders, but they wanted to screw one more advantage out of it while they were about it. They wanted to put their followers outside the influence of the tribal elders who would be sure to oppose their plans. This could presumably have been done by inserting a sentence into the oath to the effect that the person undertook not to obey tribal elders. There was one even better way. The leaders intended to push the initiates beyond the influence of the tribe for ever. They would call up the supernatural power by using one of the methods which was taboo in the eyes of the tribe. By so doing they would in no way diminish the power of the oath but they would push the initiate right outside the old tribal family: he would be beyond the pale. It was for this reason that obscenity and sex perversion were introduced into the business. By the time the Emergency started nearly every member of the tribe had been involved and the atmosphere was heavy with the guilt which such activity had engendered throughout the population.

When I first arrived I was not sure what to do about it. There was no doubt that, however much I tried to ignore it, my whole outlook was bound to be affected. The power of suggestion is still strong enough to cause the feeling of evil to upset a white man, even though he does not consciously believe in magic. If you allowed yourself to think about the oath as a whole, some of its sinister atmosphere would soon pervade your life.

The first idea to cross my mind was to fight against the evil with such reserves of good or religious spirit as I might possess. This would certainly seem to have been the 'school solution' as all the parsons and missionaries were constantly harping on it. From my point of view, however, there were two snags. First it is exhausting to fight, especially in a spiritual way: I wanted to conserve my energy for something useful. Second, by making a clear-cut division between good and evil I should be raising a barrier between myself and the loyalists on one side and the terrorists on the other. This would make it more difficult to trust them and work with them, not less so.

I can only describe the method I did adopt by way of another illustration. Supposing you are driving from London to Bournemouth and you come across a car which had just hit a tree by the side of the road. A survivor signals you to stop and help. As you draw up you see a vague tangle of wreckage but not much else. The survivor tells you briefly what has happened. In the car is a woman and her child, smashed to pulp. You cannot do much about them because they are dead. Over by the hedge is aunty, cut and dazed. Father is talking to you and he is obviously going to collapse at any moment. You jump out and make your plan. First you will fix up aunty whose bleeding must be stopped at once. Then you will calm father and finally go for help. While you are busy with aunty you are very conscious of the contents of the car just three yards behind. You didn't like to look but you caught a glimpse of blood-matted hair at the shattered window and one greeny white little hand was lying limply in the door.

What are you going to do? As time goes on your thoughts become more and more centred on the car. Soon it is an effort to concentrate on aunty's wounds. You just can't ignore horror so close by. I suggest that the best thing to do is to have a good look: open the door and look straight at whatever is inside: if possible handle it. Soon what was a vague composite picture of general ghastliness sorts itself out into its component parts. Mother looks like any other woman except that her colour has changed for the worse and some of the blood and entrails which you know she always had inside her skin are now outside. The child too is changed in the same way but there is no sudden arrival of anything extra or frightening. Now your attitude is getting more sensible. You can see *all* there is to see, you can feel *all* there is to feel. Pull them out, tidy them up if you like, put the rug over them and you are now ready to take aunty and father off to hospital.

That is the method I used to sort out my attitude towards the Mau Mau.

Looked at over one's shoulder the oath was a frightful business, suffused in evil. But look more closely and what was left? A cat hung on a stick: poor pussy. An arch of thorns with goats' eyes impaled on them: a silly scarecrow to frighten the feeble. What are they up to now? Ah yes! they have the knuckle of a dead man but that is no more than you can see in any museum dealing with anthropology. And a bowl of blood? In Nairobi Hospital a pretty young nurse is carrying two large jars of the stuff into the operating theatre for a transfusion; what next? The initiates are abusing themselves into the bowl of blood—prep school stuff. The oath administrator adds sacred soil, i.e. a handful of earth. Finally they raise the mixture to their lips: they deserve to be sick.

The whole business when looked at carefully is no more than the antics of naughty schoolboys. It is hard to imagine how on earth anyone expects to invoke a spirit by such imbecile action. What are they talking about anyway?

'If you tell anyone who has not taken this oath about it, the oath will kill you.'

'If you help anyone who has not taken the Mau Mau oath this oath will kill you.'

and so on *ad nauseam*. In other words the initiate swears to do certain things and affirms his belief that the power of the oath will kill him if he doesn't. Clearly the value of the oath depended on the intensity with which the taker believed that the oath would kill him should he fail to do as he had sworn.

It was also important for us to discover how the Mau Mau regarded the oath and this was much more difficult than working out our own feelings about it. To start with we realized that before the Emergency, most Kikuyu had an instinctive belief in magic and in the power of oaths, so that when the Mau Mau began to administer them, the initiates took it very seriously indeed. Many would be overcome by the new and sinister methods practised and most would think twice before breaking their pledge. I do not think there can be much doubt that up to the end of 1952 the Mau Mau oath was nearly one hundred percent certain, even though many of the initiates were forced into it.

After a time nearly everyone had taken the oath. In some cases, no doubt, the oaths were not honoured but the fact that the oath was not itself killing the offender would pass unnoticed, providing that other members of the movement killed him instead. With the degree of control exercised by the movement at the time this was possible.

Unfortunately for the Mau Mau they did not let the matter stand as it was. There was now another special oath decreed for those members of the movement who were being privileged to go into the forest. There were thus two oaths: one to be taken by everyone, merely to swear support for the movement, and one for those people selected to go into the forest. Even within these two oaths there was a lot of variation as to the way in which they were administered. Again, the matter did not stop there. After a time everyone was re-oathed to make sure that they were fully charged.

It was not long before the mystery of the oaths wore rather thin, because of their constant repetition. Furthermore oathing was tied to money collecting, so that the initiate often had to pay thirty or forty shillings for the privilege of joining a society of which he was already a member. Another change was that as Mau Mau power faded it became more and more difficult for the gangs to help the oath to kill offenders. Some people who broke their pledge found that it did not mean a sudden and mysterious death.

By the beginning of 1954 the binding power of the oath had been greatly reduced. By August the mystical effects had gone and the Mau Mau looked on it as little more than a racket by which their subscriptions to the movement could be increased.

I believe that it is fair to sum up the problem as follows. So far as I was concerned, the whole paraphernalia of oaths and so-called horror no longer meant anything at all. I had seen it at close quarters and regarded it as childish and dirty rather than dangerous and sinister. My feelings about any given man depended on whether I thought he was pleasant or useful and my knowledge that he had indulged in oathing made not the slightest difference.

As far as most of the ex-terrorists were concerned, I think that the oaths and the memory of them had little effect. They had long since given up believing that there was any supernatural power in the oath that would kill them and they realized that whilst working as members of our teams they were pretty safe from their former friends. They, like us, more or less laughed the matter off. Certainly I felt no barrier between myself and the men as I sat with them in the compound talking or just watching the brilliance of a tropical night. Far from it: I often felt far closer to these people as a result of our shared experiences than I do to more normal acquaintances.

I have been into this question in great detail because it was fundamental to the way in which we lived. I have tried to show how we managed to



John and Oleo



Omondi

build up strong bonds of trust between ourselves despite the so-called gulf of evil which the Mau Mau oath was supposed to engender. I have tried to show how this happened—not because we approved of it or were indifferent towards it, nor even because we pretended not to see what was under our noses. It happened because we looked carefully at what we had previously thought was ghastly and found that it was silly and childish. We found that it was far too small a thing to stop the more positive feelings of liking and trust which grew up between us as we lived and worked together.



Hooded Men



Frank Kitson

four strange F.I.A.s from Nyeri, Embu, Meru and the Rift Valley would settle down to being taught their business by us. I waited at Kamiti to greet them but just before they arrived I got involved with an affair which had my attention for the rest of the day. During the morning Phillip Myburgh had taken out a police patrol to follow up a report of some terrorists. He made contact with the gang in the Reserve some miles north of Githunguri and opened fire. In the course of the next few minutes Phillip's patrol accounted for four of the enemy but an unlucky shot from their rearguard hit him in the body and he died shortly afterwards.

Some time before this action Phillip Myburgh had been made a Chief Inspector and put in charge of the police in Githunguri Division. His death was a serious loss to the District as a whole and a source of grief to all those who had come in contact with him over the past months, including Eric and myself. Fortunately we both had so much to do that we had no time for brooding.

The work was unending. One year earlier I had arrived in Kiambu as D.M.I.O. to help Ken Goodale, the District Special Branch officer. Now I was Provincial M.I.O. for Central Province South or Nairobi Area as it was more usually called, working under the direction of the Colony M.I.O. in Special Branch H.Q. and alongside the Superintendent in charge of Nairobi Area Special Branch.

In a totally separate capacity I was Provincial M.I.O. for Southern Province and for this purpose worked with the officer in charge of that Province's Special Branch whose office was at Ngong. Luckily there was only one District of Southern Province involved in the Emergency; that is to say Narok. Even so I still had to visit it, look after the D.M.I.O. and F.I.A.s there and know what was going on.

In another separate capacity again I was involved in training all the F.I.A.s in the Colony at the new Training Centre. Quite apart from preparing the doctrine I was responsible for the financial affairs, equipment, maintenance and administration of the post. I was also concerned in assembling the students, dispersing them afterwards and writing reports on them.

In September 1953 when I arrived I had one Kenya Regiment sergeant and two K.P.R. officers. A year later I commanded six officers, thirteen European warrant officers and sergeants, and a large number of loyal Africans and ex-terrorists—probably about two hundred all told, not including ordinary informers. In one way and another I had a big job, especially when distances and the fact that the roads are all dust tracks, are borne in mind. On September 13<sup>th</sup> I was made a major.

### *Chapter Eleven*

## **NAIROBI'S LAST FLING**

THE time taken in preparing the ground for the F.I.A.s training was much longer than we had originally estimated. Although I had rented the house and finished preparing the lectures by the beginning of August, the first students did not arrive until halfway through September, though the instructor and F.I.A. in charge of administrative arrangements arrived some days before.

George Hales was the instructor. He had spent the past months as one of Ian Feild's F.I.A.s in Fort Hall and I knew him fairly well. He had done splendid work and would be able to teach from his own experience. I was particularly glad to get one of the Fort Hall F.I.A.s as the instructor because the problem in that District was unlike ours and similar to that confronting the Nyeri and Embu people. In consequence Ian Feild had worked out a number of methods for obtaining information which were different from ours. I reckoned that with Hales' experience of the Fort Hall type of operation combined with my own, we should be able to compete with F.I.A.s from any of the Districts.

I was also glad to have Hales because he had been responsible for killing Kago and was well known to all the F.I.A.s on that account. With such an achievement to his credit he would be certain to command the attention of the students for his ideas.

By the time the first batch were due to arrive I had been over every part of the course with George Hales, but even so I was nervous as to how

Although I had too much work it was no longer as amusing as it had been before. More and more of my time was spent in people's offices and less and less bumping around police stations and Kikuyu Guard posts in the Reserve. Several times I caught myself feeling as a stranger in the presence of somebody who had been a close associate only six or eight months earlier. I did not like these developments, but I could do nothing about them.

I tried hard to keep in touch at ground level and the F.I.A.s who came on the courses were a great help. Every week I had one or two in to supper and would spend hours talking about different ways of getting information. I was also better at Swahili so could have reasonably intelligent conversations with Matenjagua and the rest of our Africans.

By September our camp at Kamiti had grown much bigger. Originally we had designed it to accommodate our team of seven loyalists together with a few prisoners. We still had our seven loyalists, Chebere having been replaced by a new man. But we also had a fairly large number of ex-terrorists who worked in the teams. In addition several of the men had brought their wives and children and there were one or two other young ladies to keep the bachelors company and to accompany pseudo gangs; most of the real gangs had women members.

Even on the domestic side there had been changes. Mahomet the driver had left some months earlier and had been replaced by a soldier in the East African Service Corps, named Oleo. He lived in the shed behind the kitchen with his wife Helen and his two children, Omondi and Nyawene. They were all very much part of the family. Nyoike and Nganga were still with us and we had a new man who worked in the garden. Altogether we were a little village in our own right.

Kamiti was in a very convenient position from my point of view because it was on the borders of Kiambu and Thika and, from it, roads ran to both these places and Nairobi as well. It also seemed to be in a focal position as far as the Mau Mau were concerned and gangs were perpetually passing nearby. Almost every night there would be an alarm of some sort on a neighbouring estate with rockets going off and guns firing. Nothing much ever happened but it was enough to break into the night's sleep. As a rule, if the action was nearby Eric and I would run out into the compound to see if we could work out where the trouble was coming from and we would then drive to the area in case help was needed.

On one occasion there appeared to be a terrific battle going on a short way off in the direction of the Kamiti prison. Evidently the Security Forces were engaged because we could see illuminating cartridges going

off and hear orders being given. We decided to keep well clear because so many others were already involved but we climbed onto the roof of Eric's car to watch. We could tell there was a fire from the red glow in the sky and every now and then as an illuminating rocket climbed above the horizon we saw a column of smoke.

After about twenty minutes the shooting stopped and then the fire died out. Next morning we heard that one of the prison warders had taken a wardress out for a walk, and the sentry had mistaken the two of them for a gang when they returned to the prison. He sounded the alarm and shot the warder and wardress. He then fired a rocket into the air to illuminate the scene but it landed in the thatched roof of one of the huts and set it alight. This in turn accentuated the general state of confusion and the prison guards rushed to the perimeter fence firing furiously to repel a non-existent gang.

Although there were no terrorists involved in this case there usually were. A few nights later a gang locked the night watchman of a quarrying firm into a hut and then set fire to the explosive store with spectacular results. The following week the Mau Mau killed the headman on an estate nearby. On the whole we liked having gangs around because it was exciting and provided our teams with good opportunities for practice. We did not think it likely that we would ourselves be attacked but we made the necessary arrangements just in case.

Following the custom of the army we posted our sentries in pairs. One would be an African and the other was the dog Wambogo. The theory was that the African sat by a small watch-fire nodding through the night and relied on Wambogo to wake him in case of attack. The only trouble was that the dog slipped away into one of the huts when the weather was bad. I knew this happened but had been unable to think of any way of avoiding it. Often I used to take a walk round the compound before going to bed and wonder if the dog would think the weather good enough to go on duty.

One night I went out for my final stroll at about twelve o'clock. There was a slight breeze and a clear sky. I had a word with the sentry, huddled in his overcoat over a few glowing embers and heard Eric talking to some of the men in one of the huts as I went past. He often stayed with them chatting until two or three in the morning. I noticed that Oleo and his family had blown out their light and were presumably asleep. A murmur of conversation was coming from Nganga's shed which did not surprise me as his wife had come in from the Reserve to stay with him for a few days: they probably wanted another baby next year.



The way into my bedroom lay through a large annex which we had built onto the main house to accommodate the ex-terrorists. Matenjagua was still awake so I sat on the bed he shared with another man and talked to him for a while. He looked like a gollywog because he had unplaited his long hair and it stuck up all round his head. After a time the light went out for want of fuel. I stumbled over the end of a bed and woke several terrorists before finding the door which led into my room.

I went to bed at once but kept the light on to read. After about an hour a heavy shower blew up and I had to move a bit to one side as the roof was leaking. Lying in bed I could see clearly the beams above and the wardrobe. Beyond the circle of light the shape of the dressing table was vaguely discernible against the end wall and beside it the black wooden door which led into the ex-terrorists' quarters. I put out the light soon after one o'clock and listened to the rain rapping against the roof. Inside, drops of water joined the puddle on the floor at regular intervals of about three quarters of a second.

I woke up terrified some time later. For a moment I could not think what had roused me, then there was a second crash followed by another and shouts and the dog barking. I struggled in the inky blackness to find a torch. Men were scuffling around next door and there was more firing from the compound. For a few seconds there was silence broken by the crying of little Omondi in Oleo's room. Then a sten-gun started firing and a shotgun.

By this time I had got my torch, a pair of shoes and my coat, so I pushed through the crowded annex into the yard, which was full of Africans running here and there. Eric was giving out orders and soon the shambles sorted itself out.

Nothing further happened so I asked Eric what on earth had been going on. Apparently it was Wambogo's fault because he had slipped away and left the sentry when the rain started. Chege, who was on duty, was dozing away as usual when he was jerked to his senses by a noise from the perimeter fence. He looked up and saw two terrorists a few yards away in the act of climbing over it with a can of petrol. Behind them on the path were several others. The gang had failed to spot Chege because he was sitting up against a hut and his fire had gone out.

Chege shut both eyes tight and fired his rifle in the general direction of the gang. The two men climbing the fence were so surprised that they dropped the petrol can and darted back to join their friends. Some of the others fired back but they evidently had no intention of storming our

camp in the face of opposition. By the time reinforcements reached Chege they had gone.

This was the first of several attempts made by the Mau Mau to destroy our post. Altogether they tried six times but each attack was more pathetically inefficient than its predecessor. Only once did I arrive in time to see the terrorists and then I just caught a glimpse of them as they hurried away into the coffee. Eric was much quicker than I at getting into his firing position because he didn't bother to put anything on. On one occasion I arrived to find him stark naked firing his sten-gun from a sand-bagged parapet just outside his room.

Even though these Mau Mau were so hopeless, the attacks were unpleasant. I have always held the opinion that being woken up by guns firing nearby is alarming. The situation may not be serious but it takes a moment or two to find out. During that time you are thrashing around in the dark trying to see who is who and there is always a chance of an accident. Then again, there was the fact that my route to the compound lay through the shed where the ex-terrorists lived. In theory I was quite safe: we had worked it all out carefully. In practice I was never quite certain that one of them might not one day lose his head and try and revert to his former friends. In that case I stood to lose my head and various other parts as well.

Mwangi Toto was responsible for the first attack on our post. Some time afterwards I got hold of his diary and read an account of the action, duly recorded for posterity. I was interested to learn that the battle raged for three hours and that about fifteen of our men had fallen at the hands of the freedom fighters. Apparently we wept and pleaded for mercy. Though many times as strong as his gang we were utterly defeated, the only survivors being those of us who hid in the coffee. He did not mention why he left the premises in such good order.

Although the raid was one of his less real victories, Mwangi Toto continued to do a lot of damage and in the middle of September he did genuinely overrun the prison camp at Lukenya and release some of the detained people. That was his last major success. Later in the month he returned with his gang to Nairobi. He was killed in a fairly brisk engagement just outside the city in the middle of October.

Even after Mwangi Toto's death his gang, under the command of Karioki Chotara, continued to be a nuisance to the people of Nairobi. One of their most unpleasant habits was to set fire to houses and the arson campaign was a serious problem to the authorities on the spot. All the same, the gang continued to do more good than harm because it was still

drawing off from the forest the arms, ammunition and money collected by the Fort Hall and Nyeri inhabitants of the city.

Throughout the summer Mwangi Toto had so dominated the scene in Nairobi that we had not taken much notice of the Embu and Meru communities there. Ever since the Central Committee ceased to function properly we had imagined that they had been unable to find any satisfactory outlet for their activities, but in this we were mistaken.

On October 23rd a badly mutilated African was found wandering round a large estate to the north of the city. He said that he was a member of the Kikuyu Guard and that he had been set upon by a gang who cut off his fingers and gouged out his eyes. We couldn't make out why the terrorists had taken so much trouble and then left the job unfinished but from the sound of it, this was the work of one of the small Nairobi Strong Arm groups who were notoriously unpredictable.

Two days later a police patrol ran into a large gang in the same area. The terrorists went to ground in a swamp and the patrol was much too small to close with them. First reports put the gang strength at about eighty and a battalion of soldiers hurried to the spot. During the remainder of the day the soldiers tried various ways of getting the enemy out of their hiding place and managed to kill or capture about twenty of them. Darkness fell before the job was finished so the battalion put a light ring round the area and kept the scene illuminated during the night. Meanwhile Eric and I went to work on the prisoners.

We discovered that twelve hard-core terrorists had left the Mount Kenya forest opposite Meru District and travelled to Nairobi during August. Their aim was to collect recruits and supplies. On arrival their leader Nyaga had tried to contact the Commander-in-Chief, as they were under the impression that this officer still functioned as the co-ordinator of supplies for the Mau Mau as a whole, as his predecessor had done in the days of the Central Committee. Nyaga was naturally surprised to find Mwangi Toto with the War Office acting as a gang in Limuru, but they had their photographs taken together and spoke a lot about unity and friendship. A day or two later they parted company and Nyaga returned to the city without any supplies or recruits.

At this juncture the Embu and Meru District committees in Nairobi heard of Nyaga's visit and got in touch with him. During the months since they had been cut off from the forest they had collected a lot of money and arms and they also knew many men who wanted to join forest gangs. They agreed to fit out a party for Nyaga and during October it assembled on the outskirts of Nairobi. The gang had been almost ready

to leave for the forest when the police patrol made contact with it.

It took us all night to work this out from the prisoners' stories and just before dawn Eric and I left Kamiti to visit the scene of the action: we wanted to tell the commander what we had discovered and we hoped there might be some more prisoners for us to interrogate.

We drove through Ruiru and over the Nairobi-Thika road. As night passed colour came back to the scene. First Eric's beret started to look blue instead of black and his shorts became washed-out khaki instead of white. Then the horizon slipped further away, the lights were no longer needed and the grass showed up brown instead of grey. By the time we reached the Nairobi River the sun had slid up over the edge of the world and a few bucks were to be seen with their heads down and their tails flicking from side to side. Further away we saw a herd of European cattle.

We crossed the river just above the Nairobi Falls and then turned right to follow it upstream. For a time we bumped our way along a heavily rutted track between the river and some sisal before arriving at the army command post, set up on the bank. At this point the river was much wider but completely covered in long rushes so that we could not see the water at all.

We discovered that no more prisoners had been captured during the night. Whilst we were talking to the officers further reinforcements of police and Kikuyu Guard from the farm labour forces were arriving. In an hour's time there would be a sweep through the swamp to finish off the survivors. I should have liked to see the sweep but I decided that I ought to go into Nairobi to report on the situation. We got back into the Land-Rover and cruised off along the river bank thinking of various things including breakfast. We had not gone far before our thoughts were interrupted by a bullet which cracked overhead. We cursed what we thought must be a careless soldier in the cordon but took no more notice until another shot went close by the vehicle. This time we dismounted and walked towards the river, but it was not until yet another bullet passed in our direction that we realized we were being shot at deliberately.

The officer on the cordon had appreciated the situation correctly to start with, and collected together about ten or twelve soldiers and some police and Kikuyu Guard. As we reached the edge of the rushes this force started closing in from three different directions on the place where the terrorist seemed to be lying. The full implications of this manoeuvre were brought home to us when the party on the far side of the target opened fire. A stream of bullets cut into the grass at our feet and Eric and his two Africans threw themselves to the ground in accordance with current

military teaching on the subject of 'coming under fire'. I remained standing because I felt that if bullets were landing near my feet it was foolish to put my head in the way. There must of course be a flaw in my reasoning as the Army could not possibly be wrong over such an elementary matter, but I'm still puzzled by the problem.

Luckily none of us were hit and whilst the action was raging I actually picked out the terrorist who was firing at us. He was only about thirty yards away and I could just see his head through the rushes. Sometimes out hunting I have seen a fox trying to avoid attention and for a moment have hoped that no one would notice so that the quarry could make good his escape. A fraction of a second later and the feeling is gone. From then on all one's life is concentrated in the chase. On this occasion I had a similar feeling and was still hoping that no one would see the terrorist when he jumped to his feet, ran a few yards and lay down again in a better position. Then he made a silly mistake. Instead of crawling unseen to a new position, he lifted his head and shoulders to look round. As he did so I heard a shot and saw his head jerk back as the bullet hit him. He started raising himself to his feet but then he slithered back into the water.

I did not wait to see what would happen next. I knew there would be a rush of Kikuyu Guard to strip the body of clothes and valuables and I also guessed that this Mau Mau was one of the leaders, otherwise he would not have had a .303 rifle. There might well be documents or other articles worth saving but I should have to get there quickly.

I splashed through the water and got astride the body before any of the guardsmen could reach it. Strictly speaking it was not a body as life was not extinct but the bullet had passed through the neck severing the main artery. A fountain of red blood spurted out colouring the water for some distance round about, so I could see that there was nothing I could do to save his life. The usual treatment for a severed artery is of course a tourniquet but the C.I.D. did not approve of them being applied to people's necks.

While I was going through the man's pockets there was a commotion immediately behind me. A soldier had discovered another bandit hiding in the rushes and was shepherding him to the bank, helped by some Kikuyu Guard. This time Eric and Gicheru, who was one of the two Africans with us, went to take charge of the prisoner. As soon as I had got what I could from the dead man I joined the three of them who were by this time sitting talking on the river bank.

The prisoner turned out to be none other than Nyaga himself and as good luck would have it, we discovered that he was a great personal friend

of Gicheru. Before the Emergency the two of them plus Chebere had been engaged in certain commercial activities on a stall in Nairobi. Now they were chatting away as though they had only been parted for a few days, and Nyaga seemed quite happy to answer any of Gicheru's questions. To start with he told us that the terrorist we had just killed was the R.S.M. I was holding the dead man's watch but Nyaga took it with a lordly gesture and gave it as a present to Gicheru, saying that he would like to have given him his own watch but that one of the Kikuyu Guard had taken it.

Nyaga had not only lost his watch but also his trousers during the affray. As he sat on the river bank between Eric and his old friend Gicheru, he presented a strange sight. He was wearing a very smart leather jerkin with army badges of rank sewn onto it, but below he had only a very brief pair of underpants. He was a small man and looked quite young. Like most hard-core terrorists his hair was plaited into long strings but the bottom inch or so of each plait was black wool. He had obviously cut off his own hair to go into Nairobi when he first arrived and had tacked on the wool to distinguish himself from the recruits.

We took Nyaga back to Nairobi to interrogate him properly. He had been in the forest for a long time so he had a lot to tell us. We worked on him for several days. Most of the time was spent in my office, talking, smoking, eating pork pics and drinking Pepsi-cola. Ever}' now and then we made a trip to the mortuary or a police post to identify the captured and the dead.

During this time we got to know Nyaga very well. He was typical of the better type of young terrorist. He had joined the gangs in search of excitement and had worked his way up on account of his personality and daring. He had a terrific sense of fun but was as cruel and callous as most of the rest of his tribe. We asked him what he knew about the Kikuyu Guard who had been found wandering around without his fingers or eyes and he said that the man had been a member of his gang but had committed some crime. Nyaga had damaged him as a punishment.

Due to his friendship with Gicheru he told the truth from the start and almost became an honorary member of our organization. We all liked him and I badly wanted him to stay and work with us. Unfortunately too many people had seen him captured so he had to be handed over for trial, with the rest of his gang. When the time came for him to go I was very sorry though he did not seem to mind much. He said that he knew he would be executed but regarded it as all part of the fortunes of war. The police came and collected him from Kamiti and I watched him driven

away in a Land-Rover. Gicheru and he were talking and joking until the Land-Rover left and afterwards Gicheru wandered back to his hut whistling through the gap in his front teeth as though he had been seeing a friend off at the station.

Some weeks later Nyaga was hanged together with most of the other prisoners.

The complete destruction of this large gang so near Nairobi had a profound effect on the Mau Mau there. For nearly two months they had laboured to find and equip the recruits and a lot of money had been collected and spent on them. Then, almost in front of their eyes, the gang was broken up and every penny wasted. Nairobi received a shock from which it did not recover. Never again did the Mau Mau in the city try to raise a large gang of recruits for the forest.

## THE RISE OF WARUINGI

IN October 1954 the tide of events was flowing strongly against the Mau Mau. The gangs which six months earlier had been running riot over the main Emergency areas round Mount Kenya and the Aberdares had been forced back into the depths of the forest by the Security Forces. More important was the fact that the Government now had a firm grip on the people in the Reserves, having concentrated them all in villages. This protected the loyalists and multiplied the difficulties facing Mau Mau supporters in their attempts to contact gangs. By this time all semblance of political control by the committees over the gangs had passed. Finally Fort Hall and Nyeri, Embu and Meru, had been cut off from the Nairobi base.

It cannot be denied that the situation seemed unpleasant in certain local areas. For example Fort Hall gangs, cut off from their supporters in the Reserve, were making more frequent forays on the farms to the west of the Aberdares to steal food. This could hardly be expected to please the settlers in that area even though it was a sign of weakness on the gang's part. Similarly the European inhabitants of Nairobi who saw their houses burnt would be unlikely to approve of Mwangi Toto's gang even though it was using supplies that had been intended for the forest. None the less, the essential fact remained that the gangs had failed to achieve their purpose which had been to unite the Kikuyu people and destroy any of them who refused to join the movement. By failing to do this they had lost the

war, regardless of any minor inconvenience they caused to Europeans or Asians.

There was only one black mark on the picture: Kiambu. In early days this district, like Nairobi, had made an important contribution to the Mau Mau movement in the form of money and supplies. When the Security Forces destroyed the base, Nairobi's usefulness came to an end because the Mau Mau supporters continued to contribute in the same way as before—i.e. by collecting money and recruits—but their leaders failed to put the contributions to good purpose. On the other hand, once Kiambu had broken away from Nairobi it started to make its contribution in a different way altogether: it tried to produce a whole district united against the Government round which the rest of the movement could rally. It used the same means of achieving this aim as Fort Hall and Nyeri had already used and which had failed there: that is to say it set up a political committee—the Maguga Council of Elders—and organized powerful gangs to execute its policies.

In October 1954 Kiambu was therefore in exactly the same position as Fort Hall had been one year earlier. The District Emergency Committee had no alternative but to go through the whole bitter process of concentrating the inhabitants for protection and repressing them to prevent support going to the gangs. Meanwhile the Security Forces would have to track down and destroy the terrorists and arrest their principal supporters.

Walter Gash was the District Military Intelligence Officer and on him would fall the main burden of producing the information. He had come to the District in April and had made major contributions towards the discovery of the various methods. He had carried out many pseudo patrols and had been largely instrumental in devising the system of handling informers which we used all over Nairobi Area. In addition his organization was bigger than any of the others in my area and he had been through hard times in getting it all concentrated under his thumb.

Gash had two outstanding characteristics. First was the clarity of his mind. He always knew exactly what he wanted and he could express it forcefully either by word of mouth or in writing. Second, and more important, was the impression of power which he gave. This came partially from his ability to express his thoughts and partially from his obstinate determination to get his own way. Walter was older than most of the others and had none of Henning's elan or Eric's intuition about Africans. Although he liked a joke well enough he was dry and deliberate, determined and powerful. He worked flat out himself and was intolerant of anyone who did not do the same. On returning from leave in June I

found he had sacked a promising new F.I. A. because, finding a pair of patent leather dancing shoes in his room, he decided that the man must be a playboy and utterly useless! Few things gave me so much confidence as having Gash at Kiambu and I trusted in his judgement completely.

By October Walter Gash had accumulated a lot of information on the Maguga Council, and the District Emergency Committee decided that the time was ripe for their removal. The business would not involve troops but would entail arresting and interrogating the members of the committee. There would be no danger or excitement but just plain hard work. The District Commissioner decided to let Gash get on with the job, using his own men. He did however lend Denis Kearney to us for the operation, to help with the questioning. In the end Denis stayed for some months.

The first problem to confront Gash was what to do with the prisoners as he caught them. There were few facilities at Kiambu for holding suspects and only the one office in which to do the interrogations. Once again Mr Lloyd, the District Commissioner, offered assistance in the form of a number of shops he had requisitioned round the market place at Karure. Before starting on the arrests Gash threw a tall wire fence round these shops and dug a ditch outside it which he filled with sharp stakes. He thus made what was the equivalent of a large Kikuyu Guard post complete with cells, living accommodation and offices. His next requirement was for staff and to this end he moved in two of the Kiambu F.I.A.s together with their teams of loyal Africans and ex-terrorists. Finally he and Denis Kearney arrived in the post. Denis brought some of his own Kikuyu Guard with him.

In this way Gash concentrated all the intelligence resources for south Kiambu before the operation started. From my point of view this was not a bad thing. By visiting the post I was often able to see several people at once and thereby save a lot of time. Karure was further from Kamiti than Kiambu but that did not matter much.

The operation lasted for about two weeks and by the end of that time the last effective Passive Wing headquarters for Kiambu had ceased to exist. For some weeks the gangs went around with no central control; after a time however the leaders got together and formed in the forest a committee called the Kiambu Parliament, but it consisted only of prominent members from the gangs themselves and it had little contact or influence in the Reserve.

During November and early December the situation was satisfactory from our point of view. The Kiambu Parliament was too feeble to

formulate a policy on which the terrorists could work to achieve their purpose of stamping out Africans who were against the movement. The Security Forces on the other hand were making good progress and succeeded in killing plenty of terrorists. In the south-west of the District the Kenya Regiment were doing very well.

When the Kiambu gangs had first started to form in the summer we had found great difficulty in discovering who the important leaders were. The main trouble was that most of them kept changing, though one or two seemed fairly permanent. Of these some were new to me, such as Kiarii Mubengi, a Rift Valley repatriate, and Nganga Kamehe. Others such as Kiarii Munuthia, a Gatundu man, and Mburu Mkono, had kept cropping up in different gangs for as long as I could remember. I kept a sharp look-out for reports mentioning Waruingi Kurier because he had impressed me at the start of the year by his aggressive spirit and the hold which he had over his men. I knew that if Waruingi once became prominent, death and destruction would multiply in Kiambu.

For a time there was no news of him. Then sure enough, he was reported as leading a small gang in die Lari Forest area. During September and October his gang grew bigger and his influence increased. He seemed to have an uncanny knack of escaping from tricky situations and although his gang was often contacted it suffered fewer casualties than the others. By the end of November Waruingi was the most influential leader in Kiambu except for Kiarii Mubengi who was the official head of the Kenya Inoru Armies, as the Kiambu gangs were called.

Fortunately Kiarii Mubengi was a fool. As long as he was in charge of affairs there was little chance of the Mau Mau consolidating their hold on the District. Early in December a Kenya Regiment patrol shot him.

There followed a period of some weeks during which no one knew what would happen. The Kiambu Parliament tried to meet but Francis Erskine had information about the rendezvous and the meeting was attended by soldiers and bombers as well as by Mau Mau. By Christmas Waruingi was supreme and during January he made a clean sweep of the gangs, putting in leaders who supported him, giving each of them an area of his own.

Waruingi's organization was efficient. His principal lieutenants, each of whom commanded a good size force, were Gitimu Ndiguire, Kinyiti Goko, Kiarii Munuthia and Nganga Kamehe. Waruingi, with a small group of his own followers, moved from one gang to another. His personal attendants included his mistress 'Kenya Tea', his R.S.M., and his clerk. In addition to the main gangs there were a number of smaller ones



Karure market

which he used for keeping in touch with the local population in the Reserve and the Kiambu Community in Nairobi.

During January, Dedan Kimathi, the main Aberdare leader, sent word to say that he recognized Waruingi as the commander of the Kenya Inoru Armies; Kimathi was always trying to bring Kiambu into his orbit. Kimathi also made Waruingi a Field Marshal and a Knight Commander of the African Empire (K.C. A.E.), but Waruingi refused to be drawn. He had already given himself both these honours anyway and several others besides.

With the appointment of Waruingi to the chief command, the stage was set for the final struggle in Kiambu District. The first eight months of 1955 were taken up with a straightforward duel between him and his gangs and the District Emergency Committee and their forces. Walter Gash as D.M.I.O. with his F.I.A.s and teams was of course responsible for providing the information on which to base the campaign.

Eric at Kamiti was still officially in charge of developing and experimenting with new ideas, but as Nairobi and Thika were dying down we found that in practice he was acting more and more frequently in support of Gash and his men. In the end the resources and experience of the Kamiti men proved to be an important factor in the battle.

Meanwhile Eric had been pressing along with his work. He had interrogated dozens of prisoners and selected likely men from them. He had then trained them as pseudo gangsters and finally given them to the F.I.A.s in Kiambu and Thika to work in their teams. He had also sent some to districts outside my area, such as Naivasha, where suitable men were not easy to find.

In the course of his work Eric had frequently been in contact with gangs. Usually he just brought back information but now and then he got involved in actions. Once when out with two of his men he met a gang of five and shot three of them with his sten gun at a range of sixty yards in very poor light: a phenomenal feat of marksmanship. The next week he and Walter Gash between them killed five of a gang of twelve.

I still went out on a lot of patrols myself. Very often our pseudo gang would be making routine visits to the small support groups in the Reserve or in labour lines. We had to do this so that the local Mau Mau would get to know us and trust us. Otherwise they would not keep us informed of the movements of the real gangs or put us in touch with the leaders when they visited the area. Eric did not mind my coming on these occasions because I could be left on the outside of the meeting as the sentry. This suited me as the others had to eat the food prepared for them. I often saw



Kikuyu village

native food ready for eating when I searched a hut and could not have brought myself to eat the stuff our men were offered.

As a rule nothing much happened at these meetings other than gossip, though sometimes our gang would have to administer the odd oath, or collect some money. Not to have done so would have seemed strange at that time.

Issuing the Mau Mau oath was rather troublesome at first because of all the paraphernalia. Towards the end of 1954 the real Mau Mau were finding the same thing. The main difficulty lay in getting the raw meat and die bowls of blood etc. Then some bright oath administrator thought up a new oath which could be administered with far less fuss. The initiates still swore the same things but the power of the oath was invoked by holding two rounds of ammunition. Exactly why this was deemed to have the right effect I never discovered. It was of course illegal for an African to be in possession of ammunition so perhaps the Mau Mau felt that the mere fact of the initiate holding the rounds would put him beyond the law and thus force him into the movement. Anyhow it was a far easier and quicker oath to arrange and administer and far less unpleasant. Matenjagua and the others did not approve of the 'Ammunition Oath' because there was no meat to eat afterwards.

One night I was out with some of the men on one of these routine visits. We were all dressed as terrorists and my face was covered in grease-paint: we had stopped using burnt cork in favour of actors' make-up several months previously. The visit went off well enough. We had gone to see some Africans in a labour lines just outside Kiambu township, and I was left leaning up against a barbed wire fence admiring a new moon while the others went inside a hut. As I waited, I watched the headlights of cars going along the main road from Kiambu to Nairobi and hoped we would not have to lie in the ditch beside the road for too long before we got a chance to cross.

In due course our gang reappeared and we started to pick our way towards the road. We passed under some big trees in a field which was more like England than Kenya, crawled through a barbed-wire fence and made our way downhill towards a little river which flowed into the valley below. Just before reaching the bank we realized that there was another group of men moving along the river towards us.

This was a tricky situation. If the other people were terrorists we could have a battle but we would not know whether they were or not until we got close to them. There was also a chance that they were a police patrol in which case we should have a very rough time.

Throughout our operations as pseudo gangs our greatest fear had always been meeting a Security Force patrol. We had laid on an elaborate scheme for clearing areas before going into them but we were never completely sure that they would work. As we closed on the other group it became apparent that this was one of the occasions when the arrangements had gone wrong. We could not call out because the one thing we had to avoid was giving the show away to the people in the labour lines.

This was one of the few times when I could be useful so leaving the pseudo team with Eric, I crawled towards the patrol. I washed the blacking off my face and hands and then when only a few yards off, I called out softly hoping that the patrol would not shoot at me and that the Africans on the farm would not hear me. There were a few tense moments while the patrol wondered whether I was leading them into an ambush and I visualized a worried young police officer fingering his patchett gun surrounded by African askaris with rifles. As nothing happened I crept near enough to explain my business with a convincing if somewhat discreditable account of my activities in the labour lines. Fortunately the police were persuaded of my identity even though they may have reserved their feelings as to my character and we got back home safely.

The Kamiti post at the beginning of 1955 presented a very different picture from that of a year before. Then there had been one house set in a pleasant garden, surrounded by coffee. Now the garden had given place to three round huts and one long one. A barbed-wire fence surrounded the whole camp, including the main house. There were sandbagged parapets in convenient places and slit trenches from which to engage the gangs which periodically came to attack us.

During the year Eric's car had become completely bedridden. For the last six months at least it had been immobile in the centre of the compound. A deep inspection pit had been dug underneath it, from which Eric could look at the axles and sump. Later a thatched roof had been built over the top to keep the rain off. Unfortunately none of these measures had helped: the old Skoda was part of the landscape but it could hardly be described as an amenity.

At the beginning of 1954 we had two chickens which had been given to us as a present. Apparently they had been of opposite sexes because by the end of the year there was a vast colony of fowls. We also had two turkeys and a baby turkey which was the size of a hen. They used to roost in the avocado pear tree. On December 23rd we killed the cock bird, intending to have it for our Christmas dinner. That evening as we were having supper the sentry came dashing in with the young bird in his arms.



It was evidently in a bad way but I couldn't make out what the man was saying. I went for the brandy and told Nganga to warm some milk but when I got back I found it dead. The poor creature had gone to roost rather late and flown into the perimeter fence on the way. Next night Eric and I had a private Christmas dinner of turkey and champagne. The champagne had been part of a Christmas present given to us by the Asian storekeeper in Kiambu from whom we bought our household requirements. I may say in passing that one or other of the owner's charming daughters gave me a present, usually peppermint, almost every week.

The poultry provided me with one of my main interests and I was always happy poking around in the odd corners finding their nests or watching the chicks grow up. The mortality rate was quite frightful but there were always plenty of eggs and fine birds for the table. The main trouble with the poultry was fleas. The whole camp was crawling with them. They were in the thatch of the roof, the chairs, mats, curtains, beds and clothes. They infested every living creature from rats upwards. There was a very flourishing colony of rats and one of the biggest frights I ever had was when two fell off a beam into the bath I kept just behind my bed. I was asleep at the time and was awoken by a terrible crash followed by screams from the terrified animals. I really did think we had been overrun in those first few seconds before I realized what had happened.

The whole problem of parasites became serious. The only answer so far as the men were concerned was to wash but we did not want the pseudos to do more of that than necessary. Although the gangsters were not as sensitive to the smell of cleanliness as they were to become later, they were none the less getting a good deal more cunning by the beginning of 1955. In order to minimize the inconvenience from bugs we used to sprinkle D.D.T. over the men once a week. For some reason this was my job and not Eric's. At the appointed time I would go into the yard where the men would be lined up and puff a generous helping over each. At the end of the line I would find Omondi and Nyawene, who regarded it as a great joke, and last of all Wambogo. When all had had their ration Matenjagua would tip any remaining powder over me. Eric was immune from parasites. He thought they were nervous of being poisoned.

Eric dealt with all ailments other than bugs. He had a first-aid satchel which contained disinfectant, bandages and two sorts of pills which were white—*aspirins*—or blue—*detasting tablets* to put in chlorinated water. The system, based on the power of suggestion, was to find out the symptoms and then tell the patient that he was obviously suffering from

such and such an illness. The next stage was to tell him that the illness was serious—as he would be sure to think that he was on the point of dying—but luckily we had the one pill which was sure to cure him. He would then eat an *aspirin* or *detasting tablet* and promptly recover. No doubt Eric's method has frequently been used to good purpose in Harley Street.

I cannot imagine how many people lived in the Kamiti Post by the end of 1954 but I should think there must have been at least forty. It was hardly surprising that with so many men in the place there was an endless series of disputes and controversies to sort out.

As soon as we started building up our numbers, my idea was to construct a hierarchy. I thought that we should have an African headman with subordinate leaders under him. My thinking was doubtless influenced by my upbringing as a soldier. Eric, on the other hand, was quite determined that there should be no hierarchy, and that no one should be above another. All were to be equal and show respect for one another. If there were to be disputes, these were to be conducted properly and every man should say what he had to say. Finally the dispute could be settled by the men themselves, and the same methods could be adopted for enforcing such discipline as we had.

In other words I was thinking like an Englishman, a soldier, or a district commissioner. People like me had introduced chiefs and headmen and tribal police. I was the Bwana Major and had I been successful in putting my ideas into practice I should merely have turned the men further and further away from their Kikuyu background which was the background of the gangs.

Eric was thinking like a Kenyan and one who knew the Kikuyu well. His ideas worked and kept the men thinking as *Mau Mau* which was very necessary if they were to play their parts properly. To start with I thought it strange that Eric should spend hours and hours squatting on his haunches listening to endless discussions. I used to get impatient and say that he should damn well tell them what to do and stop all the back-chat. Gradually I realized what he himself did not. Eric could actually think like a *Mau Mau*; this was the secret of his phenomenal success. For all my impatience I knew an asset when I saw one. To the Africans I was only the Bwana. Eric was one of themselves, only greater. They called him *Mbuthia*, which is a Kikuyu name and which I believe means 'Wise One' or 'Elder'. Sometimes Eric would become *Mbuthia* when I wanted to talk to him, which was a great bore. Then Matenjagua would try and explain to me the ways of the Kikuyu over a game of draughts.

Draughts was one of my favourite relaxations. To start with we played

with beer bottle tops on a board which was the ground scored by sticks. Later we made our own boards from boxes. Most of the men played a little but Matenjagua and I were the best. Kinyanjui—alias Crook Boy—could be good but he would always cheat if he got the chance. Whenever a new prisoner arrived Matenjagua would take him on at once and if he was any good he would be put on to playing with me. It often happened that I would come back from my day's work and be introduced to a draughts player for a game, and afterwards I might discover that he was a senior Mau Mau leader captured by Eric during the day.

Another game which we enjoyed was stalking each other round the premises with catapults. We used a particularly hard, round berry, rather like a hip or haw, for ammunition and it stung like anything if one got caught on an exposed area. We practised every sort of stratagem in connection with this game such as suing for peace when caught in the open and then letting off five rounds rapid at our conqueror should he be foolish enough to respect the armistice and put down his weapon. All contests thus became fights to the death. It was not at all a bad game especially as I could always bolt into my house, into which protocol decreed I could not be followed.

Straightforward wrestling was another popular occupation. There were no rules. I often joined in these bouts and for a long time was rather proud of my strength until one day we came back from a patrol in which we had killed a Mau Mau. Now it so happened that he had owned rather a good pair of shoes which one of the men had taken. It also happened that I was short of a good pair and wanted them too. I had often wrestled with this man before and usually won, so I thought that instead of just demanding them I would offer to fight for them. It was on that occasion that I discovered that the Kikuyu are much stronger than I had supposed. Formerly they had been humouring me.

Perhaps the most popular form of entertainment of all were the dances which were held whenever there was a good moon. On these occasions all the inmates of the post would assemble in the centre of the compound and dance to the rhythm of a man hitting a bucket with a bar. He could vary the speed or rhythm and so control the leaping of the participants. Sometimes they would do the old tribal dances, or try to. Usually they danced in pairs as they had seen white people do on the screen. Either way they were happy until far into the early hours of the morning.

Such was our life during the time that Waruingi was building up his strength. Formerly my organization had worked in the Reserve or the City of Nairobi or in the Settled Area. Unlike the F.I.A.s in Fort Hall and

Nyeri we had very little experience of operating in the forest because so few of our gangs had lived there. Now we would have to adapt ourselves to this kind of work because Waruingi clearly intended to base his gangs there. Not only would we have to adapt ourselves but the police, Kikuyu Guard and soldiers stationed in the District would have to do so too. Furthermore additional troops would be needed. Until they could be found the District Emergency Committee arranged for the R.A.F. to keep Waruingi from dying of boredom by dropping some bombs on him.

I had always been a little sceptical as to the value of bombing, as I could not imagine how the bombs could possibly be expected to land in the right place. All the same, I was keen to get to know as much as possible about the idea. I was very pleased, therefore, when Norman Coleman, who had become my deputy for Nairobi Area, very kindly arranged for the R.A.F. to take me on a bombing sortie.

On the appointed day I turned up at the Royal Air Force station on Eastleigh Airfield, and was generously entertained in the officers' mess. Then I was given an airman's helmet and earphones. I was taken to a Lincoln bomber and put into a suitable position somewhere near the middle. I could not see anything from there but it was only a temporary arrangement. Once we were airborne I was allowed to walk along to a place just behind the pilot from where I could see very well.

Our target was on the south east slopes of Mount Kenya and for the first part of the journey we followed the main road north from Nairobi. I was able to recognize Thika and then Makuyu as we swept over my own parish. After a time we were out over the broad plains of Embu and all the time Mount Kenya was getting larger and larger. Soon we were over Reserve country which could almost have been Gatundu, judging by the steepness of the ridges and valleys. We could pick out the new villages and Home Guard posts way down below.

The pilot explained that our target was in the tree forest about one thousand yards in from the forest edge. He indicated the reference point below from which we flew on a certain course for so many seconds before releasing the bombs.

As the bombs left their racks the aircraft gave a slight lurch. We banked fairly sharply and in my efforts to hang on I was unable to keep my eye on the target and so missed the explosions. The forest seemed to have slipped up beside us so that it appeared as a wall rather than a floor. We could distinguish quite clearly the demarcation between the tree forest and the bamboo and between the bamboo and moorland. For a brief but confusing moment everything was in the wrong place: sky, clouds, forest

and mountain. Long before I had sorted myself out we were back over the Reserve and flying in towards our reference point on the second run. This time I was determined to see the bombs explode and achieved my aim despite getting even more muddled in my directions.

Our last run was done at a greatly reduced height. This time we strafed the area of the target with machine guns and I was able to have a good look at the place in which we had dropped the bombs: there was not much to be seen however. After this we returned to Nairobi.

I enjoyed the outing very much and learnt a lot from it. First of all there could be no question of the crews seeing what they were bombing. They could only put their bombs onto a place indicated to them on a map or air photograph. Whether this was the right place or not depended not on them but on us, the intelligence organization, and I knew enough to realize that we could seldom pick out targets with the necessary degree of accuracy.

As time went by and we started capturing forest terrorists I always asked them their views on being bombed. From what I heard I came to the conclusion that it caused few actual casualties but that if possible gangs kept clear of areas where bombing was in progress, because they were frightened of it.

In my opinion this was the main justification for using the weapon. Bombing enabled the Commander-in-Chief to keep a measure of initiative in those areas of forest where he could not afford to send ground forces. The District Emergency Committee used bombing extensively to keep Waruingi quiet in the days during which Kiambu was short of soldiers.

## INTERESTING DIVERSION

ALTHOUGH the main target in 1955 was the Kiambu gangs, yet there was a busy period during March when our attention turned violently elsewhere.

One day Eric and I were having lunch together at Kamiti when one of his Africans called him outside for a moment. He came back with a broad grin and asked if I would like to come out on a patrol with him. This was unusual as Eric seldom volunteered to take me. It could only mean that there was something good which would be nice for me to be in on, but at the same time something so straightforward that my presence would not be an embarrassment.

Soon we were driving off down the road. Eric had one or two of his men with him and I had Matenjagua. As we moved along Eric explained the plot. There was a senior Mau Mau leader staying in a hut on the labour lines of one of the coffee farms. He had two sentries out on the road but it should be possible to approach near enough through a large patch of maize and sugar cane which grew between the hut and the road. We would stop the car some way away and get as close as we could without being seen. We would then double to different points round the hut and prevent anyone from inside getting out. There was nothing very original about the idea and it had often worked before.

We functioned very much according to plan. As the men ran to their appointed stations Eric and I entered the hut. We saw two men inside but

they turned out to be residents of the estate. We then made a search of the room and found a third African hiding under a bed. We each took a leg and gave a good jerk. There, beaming up at us from the floor with a broad grin was one of the biggest rogues I have ever met. He was also a very important catch and shortly afterwards we were sitting round a table at Kamiti on the first stage of a lengthy interrogation.

The prisoner did not want to help us, but he never had a chance because we knew so much about him. He had been the leading light of the Nairobi despatch organization which had sent recruits to the forest. After a short time at Kamiti we took him to Nairobi where all the information on his activities was concentrated. As the afternoon turned to evening and the evening turned to night we wrote down the details of his organization. Once again I had the sensation of fitting together a jigsaw puzzle which had fooled me for a long time. I had known a great many isolated facts before but I had never seen the picture clearly.

The prisoner's name was Mucena and he started life as a passive wing supporter and organizer in Fort Hall but had soon been impressed into a gang. He found life in the forest far too hard so he adopted the age-old remedy of rendering himself physically unfit for service. He chose a method of doing this which was by no means unpleasant but which was effective none the less owing to the acute shortage of penicillin in the gangs-

After treatment at the Government's expense in a hospital he decided to avoid further risk of being forcibly returned to his post by going to Nairobi. Once there his likeable nature, combined with his complete lack of any decency or moral sense, served to get him quick promotion in the Mau Mau hierarchy despite his previous record of desertion and general unreliability. Mucena's kindred spirits were to be found swarming all over the b?ses and maintenance areas in the Second World War: men who continued to make a good tiling out of the conflict without taking risks but who were none the less entertaining to meet.

Eventually Mucena had obtained a job concerning recruits in the Nairobi War Office and had been sent to organize the staging post at Kahawa just to the north of Nairobi. The country in this area was ideal for the purpose, consisting of innumerable stone quarries, labour lines and military depots. AM Mucena had to do was to arrange for the collection and accommodation of the recruits from the time they arrived from Nairobi in groups often or fifteen until they left as a gang of a hundred or more.

The operations of April 1954 hit the area badly but Mucena managed

to evade the net. As the chaos sorted itself out the Mau Mau were faced with a problem. Mucena's post at Kahawa was really too far away for Nairobi to control in the new circumstances: all of Kiambu had broken away from Nairobi as explained earlier. On the other hand there were some good reasons for trying to hold on to Kahawa. First there was its value as a staging post. Another reason for keeping it under the hand of Nairobi was that although Kahawa was in Kiambu District the population there consisted of Nyeri, Fort Hall, Embu, Meru and Rift Valley repatriates. Consequently their contributions should go to the movement as a whole and not to Kiambu.

The solution adopted by the Nairobi Headquarters was to build up a complete duplicate of their own organization in Kahawa. Thus committees there were representing the Nyeri men working in Kahawa, the Fort Hall men, the Embu, Meru and Rift Valley men, etc. At the head was a Central Committee for Kahawa with a War Office representative, who was Mucena. Thus Mucena's base was secure and the thousands of labourers in the quarries were duly fleeced for their contributions.

Contact with Nairobi was direct between the chairmen of the Central Committees of the two places on all policy matters but Mucena dealt direct with the Nairobi War Office on the affairs of the recruits: he was in fact a member of both the Nairobi and Kahawa Central Committees or Kenya Parliaments as they were being called by March 1955. Mucena also directed the activities of two useful gangs which had grown up as Strong Arm groups for the Rift Valley Committee and the Fort Hall Committee respectively. These gangs, as in Nairobi, went around enforcing subscriptions and murdering anyone opposed to the policy of the committees.

By the time it grew light on the day after Mucena's capture we could see our task clear before us. We had to smash the Kahawa Kenya Parliament, the committees representing Nyeri, Fort Hall, Embu, Meru and the Rift Valley. We also had to hunt down and destroy two medium-sized gangs attached to them. If we could do this we would cut off one of the last major sources of money and ammunition left in the Colony.

Kahawa is part of Kiambu and so by lights Walter Gash, as leader of the intelligence organization there, should have handled this information and subsequent operation. But Walter was looking at Waruingi and the forest. The population and the form of the organization were more like Nairobi than anywhere else so there was good reason for getting the District M.I.O. of Nairobi to handle the case. Norman Coleman had left this job shortly before, in order to become second-in-command of the

Area and one of his F.I.A.s, named Derek Prophet, had taken over from him. The disadvantage of Prophet handling the matter was that there would probably be a lot of information arising from the operation which would require action in Nairobi itself, so I did not want him fully committed in Kahawa.

Eventually I decided to set up a special organization to deal with the job. Gash's centre at Karure from which he had directed the operations against the Maguga Council was ideal for the purpose as it was well guarded and had more accommodation than most of our posts. Furthermore it was to Kiambu District that the prisoners would have to go for police and legal action. I decided that the best man to run the operation was Don Bush, who had previously been an F.I.A. in Nairobi but who had become D.M.I.O. Thika some months earlier when Bill Henning left. To help him he brought one of his own F.I.A.s from Thika and I sent Pete van Aardt, who had taken over as the instructor at the Training Centre from George Hales. The police also contributed a C.I.D. inspector and a Special Branch inspector to help in preparing the legal cases and detention orders.

The operations were soon in full swing; our first job was to try to catch the leader of the Kenya Parliament. At first we had refused to believe Mucena when he told us who was doing this job. We knew of course, that Africans who had appeared to be loyal in the past turned out to be Mau Mau but it was hard to believe on this occasion. The man concerned was well known to us all, and he was the leader of the local farm guard. He was the trusted friend and close associate of his employer and a leading light among the local African Christian community. He was an English-speaking man and well educated. In addition he was being paid many times more than the normal African. It was inconceivable that such a person should be chairman of a Mau Mau committee, condoning, if not actually ordering, murders and oath-taking.

Over a period of two days, however, we got more and more proof. Several of the senior Mau Mau prisoners confirmed it, and we also got documents. Eventually Eric went along to arrest him but he had gone. After a frantic search he turned up nearby. We had him safely under lock and key but we also had his former employer buzzing round like a doodlebug and two swarms of bees. Personally I did not blame him in the least. I would have fought to the bitter end on behalf of any man of mine whom I had trusted in that way. Luckily the chairman, confronted with so much evidence, made a clean breast of his activities and agreed to help us.

During the next few months I got to know him very well. He was a

very strange person. There was for example no doubt at all that he **had** acted as chairman to the best of his ability and that he had done all and more than he was credited with. On the other hand, I believe he was quite sincere in his other life. He was certainly devoted to his master and in some extraordinary way I believe he was a genuine Christian, even though he was trying to advance the cause of the Church's enemies.

By about D-plus-3 we had in the cells at Karure, Mucena, the chairman and all but one or two of the Kahawa Parliament. We were also rounding up the other committee members as fast as we could. So far we had been unable to get at the gangs.

Every now and then either Bush or one of his F.I.A.s all of whom were living with Gash at Karure, would jump into a Land-Rover with Mucena or one of the other prisoners and drive off to arrest some newly-discovered member of the organization. An hour or two later they would return with their prisoner in the back. As they came through the gate, F.I.A.s, interrogators and prisoners would look out of windows or peer round doors to see who the newcomer was. Usually the chairman or Mucena would persuade him to tell the truth without more ado, but sometimes there was a hold-up and the whole dreary business of breaking through the prisoner's reserve would start again. This involved confronting him with more and more evidence of his activities until at last he would be bound to give in, mainly so as to get back on friendly terms with the others who were helping us.

Throughout these busy days I spent most of my time co-ordinating the information gained from Karure with that coming in to Miller at Thika and Prophet in Nairobi. I was thus able to direct the operation over the whole of the area affected. Meanwhile, Eric spent pretty well every night helping with the search for the gangs and the arrests.

After about a week we did at last get a lead on one of the gangs, purely by luck. One of the F.I.A.s had been driving round Kahawa with Mucena trying to pick up a committee member when they had suddenly seen one of the terrorists walking along the road. It had been a comparatively simple job to arrest him in broad daylight and from him we started to get the story. Thereafter we carried out a number of Land-Rover patrols of this sort and succeeded in capturing one or two more.

As it turned out, our big break was the result of information which Prophet got from Nairobi. One night he had been out on patrol there and had gone to arrest a committee member. On arrival he had found a gangster who promptly pulled out a .45 revolver and aimed it straight at him. Certainly the situation looked bad as Derek Prophet could hardly

hope to raise his gun in time to kill his adversary. Instead he leapt forward in the hope of diverting the shot but no shot came. After a moment's struggle the African was made fast. Derek then discovered why the man had not fired his pistol. He had five -45 rounds in his pistol but the sixth was a -303 round which was poking through the chamber into the barrel. As the man pulled the trigger the chamber revolved but the round anchored it fast. There was no explosion.

As a result of that incident a few days later I found myself in Derek's camp in Nairobi. There was some really good information as to where the Rift Valley committee's gang was staying for the night and we decided that we would try and catch them.

We were not due to go until midnight so I settled down to supper with the Nairobi F.I.A.s. I knew them less well than the Thika or Kiambu F.I.A.s because their methods of operating were so specialized that there was not much point in my trying to learn about their ideas or teach them new ones. Norman Coleman had devised most of the methods which they used. On the few occasions that I went out with them I was struck by the nastiness of the business. In the Reserves things could go wrong but at least one was in surroundings of beauty. Squatting in the bed of a stream listening to a gang whispering in the bushes by the bank was exciting enough but at the same time beautiful. In Nairobi it was just as dangerous, if not more so, but instead of the moon lighting the trees and making patterns on the grass one had the harsh glare of high powered street lamps accentuating the ugliness and squalor of the native locations. Instead of the fresh smell of rain and soil mingling perhaps with the smoke of a charcoal fire, one experienced the sour stench of human excreta. Instead of the exhilarating rush of bodies through the darkness, the sharp points of flame, the shouting and slashing and sweat of a contact in the Reserve, there would only be the opening of a door to find a gangster or an empty room. There might be a single shot and a hole in someone's back.

On the night in question we settled down for a gossip. We may have discussed the different ways of operating which I have mentioned but it is more likely that we talked of other things such as the dastardly conduct of one of those present in pinching the girl friend of one of the Kiambu F.I.A.s who had been unable to get into the city recently. We probably also discussed the African members of the Nairobi teams, how they were doing, and what We should do to get in new blood or get rid of old.

Soon the time came to prepare for the evening's work. We would go as a gang so as to make certain of getting past the sentries. First I had to change into a battered old mackintosh and sling a blanket round my

shoulders. Then there would come the process of blacking face and hands. To complete the disguise I pulled on an old African bush hat to hide the fact that my hair is slightly different from the average African's. This was not an elaborate disguise because we were only going out for a short time and our purpose in dressing up at all was only to fool one sentry.

When we were all ready we piled into two Land-Rovers and drove to a suitable parking place about ten miles outside Nairobi. There were, with Derek Prophet and myself, two F.I.A.s, the ex-terrorist guide, and two or three of the Nairobi team.

Once we moved away from the vehicles, Derek was in charge of the party. My inefficiency at the language made it too risky for me to take tactical command of a patrol and anyhow the men belonged to Derek.

It was a fine light night and we made good time over the open country. We were moving through coffee and then down a track past some disused huts and along the side of some maize. I did not know quite where we were going but Derek was navigating so I was happy to soak up the surroundings and forget that our expedition might well land us in trouble within a couple of minutes. As time went by I gradually got more nervous. My recipe for avoiding the ill effects of fright has always been to refuse to face up to the reality of a situation until it forces itself on me. Thus by carefully keeping my thoughts off the gang I was able to enjoy my walk to some extent.

All too soon I was jerked back into the present. The patrol had stopped and I heard our African guide whispering in the shadow of a stone hut about three yards ahead. I looked carefully and saw the man talking to two more Africans who were evidently members of the gang. It was no doubt a good thing that we had not drawn blank but as usual when looking at Mau Mau from close quarters I was frightened. My heart was beating quickly and I was conscious of being cold.

As I watched, the two Mau Mau and our men walked into the hut. The ruse had worked and the sentries were not suspicious. We had a fraction of a second at least in which to be sure of surprising the enemy. There was no point in waiting any longer. With a yell Derek and I pushed into the hut and shone our torches on the occupants. I remember shouting as hard as I could to keep them frightened for long enough to get them properly covered. We all piled into the hut and pinned the gang up against the far wall. There were nine of them, that is to say about twice as many as there were of us.

Poor creatures! they were more frightened than I had been. Not one tried to get away, which was just as well from their point of view because

we had our fire-power handy. Then with one of us covering the terrorists with a sterling gun the other two would select one of the line and throw him on the floor where we tied him up with straps, ropes or handkerchiefs and bundled him outside.

After about twenty minutes they were all secured. It was as well that we had taken those precautions which we had. Our prisoners consisted of the gang leader of the Rift Valley gang with six of his men, plus the leader and second-in-command of the Fort Hall gang. They were a pretty tough bunch and proved it later by their obstinacy when interrogated and by their repeated attempts at escape. We had pulled off one of the best successes of my experience as a result of the surprise effect of our appearance.

During the course of our activities we had obtained a lot of information about Thika which we passed to Jacky Miller, who was in charge there whilst Bush was engaged at Karure. One of the things we discovered was that there had been an offshoot of the Kahawa Parliament near Ruiru. Miller decided to exploit this information in order to destroy a particularly elusive gang. His plan is of interest in that it shows what immense trouble we often had to take in order to get one good contact.

The first thing to be done was to meet the committee about which we had been told. One night Jacky went out with his team and met one of its former members. He soon learnt that the committee had ceased to function some weeks previously. During the next ten days he made several visits to them pretending to be a gang. Gradually he put fresh heart into them until they were finally operating again as before, except that Miller's team were the affiliated Strong Arm group.

The next step was to contact the real gang and Miller sent out from his committee a message to say that as they were not local men they must not collect money from the people of his area. He also told the passive wing members not to supply them. At the same time he was careful to send friendly messages suggesting that if they got in touch with his committee a plan of mutual aid could probably be worked out. Soon the strange gang had sent representatives to negotiate.

Miller did not attend all the meetings of the committee which he had resuscitated. There was no need for him to do so. Even when he did attend he would have worked through one of his team, who would act as leader, while Jacky himself hung on the edge of the group as sentry or scout. Day by day he told me about the most recent developments. The big decision would be when to act.

Throughout the scheme I was in a constant state of worry about Miller. It had been bad enough when he was only visiting his own committee

but once members of the outside gang took to attending I was doubly anxious about his personal safety. Consequently whenever he said that he would be meeting a few members of the gang that night I would urge him to spring the trap and be satisfied with the leader and one or two others. Jacky was determined to get the lot.

Finally the chance arrived and I heard that the whole gang were due to arrive one night. Even Jacky could think of no reason for further delay. I should have liked to have been in on the kill but the risks were bad enough without my being there as an additional liability.

Soon after dark, Miller and his team, which included one other F.I.A. called Andrew Hitch, went off to the meeting, which was being held in a hut. A police patrol commanded by an inspector, whom the F.I.A.s trusted implicitly, followed up and got into position a few hundred yards away. Soon after our patrol arrived the gang appeared. There was a terrific crowd inside the hut.

When everyone was present the proceedings started. The chairman of the committee made a short speech of a general nature. He would have talked about almost anything other than the business in hand: such is the Kikuyu custom. He would have been followed by one of the members of the visiting gang committee and so the affair would have gone on for many hours had not the police intervened.

Acting on a prearranged signal they closed on the hut and burst in. Most of the inmates were unarmed, as this was supposed to be a friendly meeting, so the police were able to do their business with rifle butts. Jacky and his men were indistinguishable from the rest and got their share of the bruises.

Next day I went down to inspect the bag. Two had been killed and there were fifteen prisoners. It was certainly one of the most successful operations I had ever known and no praise is too high for Miller and his team who executed the plan. Don Bush was in fact the brains behind the concept and he took part in one or two of the earlier meetings. It was a great misfortune for him that he was unable to carry *the* work through, due to his commitments at Karure.

After three weeks it was apparent that the operation as a whole had been a staggering success. We had completely knocked out the Mau Mau organization in Kahawa, destroyed two of their gangs, destroyed a further gang in Thika, and made some useful arrests in Nairobi. We had also run up against the remains of Mwangi Toto's gang and captured one of its last remaining leaders. In all we caught or killed over one hundred gangsters or senior committee members. Using little more than our own

F.I.A.s and their teams, we had dealt the Mau Mau a terrific blow. Quite apart from the committee members we had probably accounted for more actual gang members and weapons than any of the large military operations in the past six months. Strangely enough the High Command took no interest in our success and it hardly got a mention in the Press or on the local news.

The leader from Mwangi Toto's gang gave us a fair amount of trouble. Peter van Aardt was in charge of his interrogation and it would have been hard to find a better man for the job. He looked like an elderly cherub with a glint of mischief in his eye more in keeping with a street urchin than an angel. He was determined to break the prisoner's resistance and spared no pains to achieve his end. He was patient, thorough and cunning but all to no avail.

One night I came in at about three o'clock to see how the operation was going but everyone had gone to sleep except van Aardt who was still talking away to his captive whose name was Chege. There were black lines under his eyes, and I do not suppose he had had more than three or four hours sleep in the past week. Such is interrogating when there is someone important to be dealt with.

Chege was almost asleep himself, so Pete and I started to discuss all the ways we could possibly think of for getting men to talk; in every case I found that he had already tried it. We were both tired and I remember gazing at van Aardt trying to think of something else to suggest. All I could think of was how very much I should dislike being interrogated by him; I would certainly not be able to stick it for as long as Chege.

At last I had another idea. Could we perhaps try a witch-doctor on him? Everything else had been tried so it could do no harm. After a time I went home to Kamiti and next morning suggested the idea to Eric. It was most important not to get a witch-doctor from nearby as he might know something of the man or at any rate of the circumstances of the local gangs. We asked all the men at Kamiti whom they would recommend and eventually selected Kimani's choice. This was a man who lived right up against the forest in Gatundu and who could not possibly have had dealings with any of the gangsters round Nairobi. Furthermore he was said to be very old and completely indifferent to Mau Mau. Even the coming of the white man to Kenya had happened when he was nearly half way through his life-span and Kimani was sure he lived in a tribal past in which the present disturbances had no part.

Soon after breakfast Eric and I set off with Kimani to get hold of the old chap. We drove north through the coffee and entered the Reserve at

Gathage. From there we drove straight along the main ridge track towards the forest. All round us were the ridiculous little Kikuyu plots, each of an acre or two. As usual we had to keep stopping while the totos chivied their flocks of goats or cattle off the road. Once we got behind a vast charcoal lorry and drove along in a cloud of choking red murrain. Later we passed the local chief who was going to Ruiru in his ancient Ford V.8 at an impossibly dangerous speed.

The long rains had not yet arrived, so the road presented no difficulties beyond the rutting and dust which inevitably follow dry weather. As we got nearer the forest the population decreased and the valleys became steeper. A lot of the land was covered with wattle instead of maize. By ten o'clock we reached Kiganjo and passed through on the last stage of our journey. A few miles further on we pulled into the side of the road opposite a little group of huts. Eric and I got out and followed Kimani down the path. There were three round huts and a grain store. Kimani carried out the negotiations with the witch-doctor's lad. Apparently it is the custom for witch-doctors to be accompanied by a young man who is, so to speak, an apprentice. In this case he was a youth of about Kimani's age—say twenty or twenty-one.

After the usual chat it was decided that the witch-doctor would come with us and we were ushered forward to meet him. He was every bit as old as Kimani had promised and I could not imagine how he would even survive the journey to Karure. He was tall and thin and so wrinkled that his face looked like the grating on a drain. He wore an old mackintosh, shorts, sandals and a blanket. His ears were pierced and the lobes hung loose like those of most old Kikuyu, and indeed there was no way in which the casual observer could know that he was a witch-doctor at all.

When he finally drew himself to his feet we found that he was not quite so tatty as he had appeared; anyway he trotted into the Land-Rover merrily enough. Soon we were bumping our way back through the Reserve, out into the Settled Area, past Kamiti and through Kiambu. In due course we arrived at Karure with our unusual passenger.

The arrival of the witch-doctor caused quite a stir. Van Aardt brought out the prisoner and we all sat down on the grass in a circle with the witch-doctor and the prisoner in the middle. The old man started by pulling a small mirror out of his pocket and sprinkling it with white powder from a satchel which he carried on his belt. He looked into the glass and brushed some of the surface clean with his sleeve before he started to speak. Then he droned out some words which Matenjagua translated for me:



'You are Nganga, son of Karioki,' said the witch-doctor.

'Not so, I am Chege Wahome,' said the prisoner.

'You are Nganga, a son of Karioki, and you have done terrible things.'

'Not so, old man.'

The witch-doctor looked into his glass again.

'I see three men standing outside a hut. There is a wood beyond and six more men are coming out of it. One of the men has a rifle in his hands. He is giving it to the leader of the first three.'

There was a gasp from some of the men sitting in the circle. This was an incident well known to several of them as it had taken place just before they were captured. The witch-doctor went on:

'I see that one of the visitors has done wrong, for he is being accused in front of the remainder. It is a young man who is being accused. I see that he is protesting that he has not done ill, but that the three of you think otherwise'

Chege's control at this stage was evidently wearing a bit thin. The witch-doctor was describing a scene which had occurred recently. On the other hand there were other people captured who had been there, so Chege could still hope that one of them had told the old boy about it, though this was unlikely because the witch-doctor was describing a scene they would doubtless prefer to forget.

'I see that you did not believe him. You—Nganga—decided on his punishment. I see your men closing in on him and they are twirling a piece of cord in their hands. I need say no more.'

Chege sat dead still and said nothing. The other men were silent too. Only Matenjagua murmured quietly as he told me what was going on. He was scared by the witch-doctor's powers in the same way as everyone else and as he whispered he linked his little finger through mine, which was a trick of his when worried.

'It is getting dark. The visitors are going away. Now there are only the three of you left with the gun.' The witch-doctor paused.

'Now your two friends are going and you alone remain. I see you are walking to a hut; you are pulling aside the fire place; there is a hole in the floor into which you are putting the gun.'

There was complete silence in the camp. Chege was sweating. How could the witch-doctor have known about that? No one knew but himself; he had been alone. He was on the point of giving in but he remembered that as he was alone no one could corroborate the old man's story. He would say nothing.

It looked as if we were stuck. While the witch-doctor was describing

events which other prisoners could corroborate, Chege merely thought that they had primed him. When he described events which only Chege could know about, Chege still kept silent on the grounds that without corroboration we could not tell whether it was true or not.

Then Pete van Aardt had an idea. He began to question the witch-doctor on the exact place. From his description we were soon able to identify it. We decided to go and have a look, so we took Chege and the witch-doctor off in the Land-Rover.

When we got near the place we dismounted and asked the witch-doctor if he recognized the area. At first he did not, but after a time he started to do so. It was not long before he began to find his way down a track which ran past a stone quarry towards a river bed full of rushes. We walked up the bank for some way and then stopped. There, to our right, was a little wood: to our left were three huts close together.

By this time Chege was in a state bordering on collapse and even I was feeling very uneasy. Pete van Aardt was running the expedition and Matenjagua and I kept to the rear. As the witch-doctor started to make for one of the huts I found myself hoping that we would not find anything. The whole business was too uncanny. Despite nearly two years with the Kikuyu I was not prepared for this sort of thing.

'If wishes were horses'... it was no use wishing. As we came into the hut I saw the old man bend down and flick away a piece of board. There below was the hole in the floor. Chege had had enough.

That was the end of the search. I paid the witch-doctor his fee of fifty shillings and sent him back home.

To this day I have not been able to work out what happened. My personal opinion is that the witch-doctor was able to pick up the thoughts of the ex-terrorists and Chege and work out the story from them. Telepathy is a widely accepted accomplishment and that is the only acceptable explanation that I can give. One thing I am sure about is that there could have been no collusion anywhere. The whole business was absolutely genuine.

*Chapter Fourteen*

THE FOREST

THERE can be little doubt that the most effective means of getting information and killing Mau Mau gangsters was the pseudo gang technique which Eric had first tried in April 1954. We had used it in the Reserves, in the Settled Areas, and in the city. We had not, however, done much about developing the idea for use in the forest.

The reason for this was that we in Nairobi Area had not had gangs of any size staying in our parts of forest before Christmas 1954. On the other hand I had often thought about its use there and had discussed it with many of the F.I.A.s from other areas when they came on the courses at Kamiti. The first long discussion which I remember on the subject took place in my house on November 21st when Benjie Hatfield, an F.I.A. from Embu, came to dinner. I remember that we went on talking until nearly half past two.

It may be that already by this time some F.I.A.s had experimented with the idea, but I doubt it. The first serious attempts, as far as I know, took place in Fort Hall about a month or more afterwards under the direction of Ian Feild. Very soon he and his men were having success and once more we saw the people who said that 'it could not possibly work' proved wrong. Unfortunately I cannot tell the story of this development at first hand though I got it week by week from Ian as he went along. Soon the names of Summers, Prichard and Hvass, the Fort Hall F.I.A.s, were well known throughout Special Branch. Fortunately they avoided becoming

too well known to the general public. Early in 1955 Ian Feild himself led a patrol which had an astonishing success against a Mau Mau meeting deep in the Fort Hall forest and there could no longer be any doubt that the ruse would work there as well as anywhere else.

There were one or two very obvious differences as between operating in the forest and operating elsewhere. Normally when operating outside the forest one could disguise oneself, go out, do the work and come home in time to go to bed as a normal person. Sometimes one might have to go out several nights running but there was always the interval in which one returned to a normal existence. Operating in the forest was different. From the moment you entered until the time you left you had to live as a Mau Mau gangster in case you were being watched. You had to dress like one, act like one, eat like one, walk around as they would and finally make a camp like theirs and go to sleep as they did. Such routine imposed a great strain on the Africans who were accustomed to living out of the forest. It was even more difficult for the Europeans.

On the other hand there was no passive wing to bother with, no long meetings to attend during which it would be easy enough to make a slip whilst being watched by suspicious eyes. Roughly speaking, anyone you met in the forest was a terrorist so you knew pretty well where you stood.

If I had to compare the tasks of carrying out pseudo operations inside the forest with conducting them outside, I would say that it was easier to get some sort of results inside, but to do a really good job inside took more training and experience than outside. In addition the strain and discomfort of living as a Mau Mau inside the forest was greater than doing so outside. I do not think that it is possible to try and compare the risks of the two sorts of operation except to say that you stand a better chance of annihilating your opponents among buildings than you do in the open, but the reverse is also true.

Nairobi Area had not led the field in developing the forest idea in 1954 because of shortage of forest terrorists. By early 1955 this situation had changed owing to the movement into the forest of Waruingi and his gangs. We accordingly decided to make up for lost time.

The first thing to do was to discover where Waruingi's gangs were living. This was a matter for straightforward patrolling and nothing to do with pseudo work. Early in April I asked Peter van Aardt, who had just finished a course at the Training Centre and who was short of students for a week, to go into the forest with our latest ex-Mau Mau to have a look round. I arranged that he should accompany a military tracker combat

section who were doing a routine patrol of the area. My idea was to get from van Aardt some general information of a more or less geographical nature without upsetting the military patrol programme. Once I had it, I would be in a position to recommend to the District Emergency Committee that they should send in a full pseudo patrol.

When Pete came back from the forest, Eric and I had a long talk with him. He had obtained a lot of useful information and it was obvious where we should send our first pseudo patrol. I well remember the de-briefing as Pete was indignant at the way in which he had been treated by the patrol commander, who had actually sat apart from his men to eat his food and had generally behaved as an army officer would when carrying out normal operations with soldiers. I remember that I too was shocked by the story. Though a regular officer, I had got so used to working with sergeants of the Kenya regiments, African loyalists or ex-terrorists as friends, that I had forgotten about service usage completely. Eventually, no doubt, we got over our indignation.

A few days later we were ready for Eric to take in a full scale pseudo gang and he and I went into Kiambu to discuss the question of clearing part of the forest of other Security Forces for our use. But when we arrived we found that no one was in the mood for discussing such matters with us. Inside the District operations room there was an unusual atmosphere of depression.

It did not take us long to discover what was going on. Two European boys had been found killed about five miles away. They had gone out to shoot pigeons and evidently run into a gang, who had relieved them of their weapon and murdered them. We both knew that it would be impossible to get much sense out of anybody on any other subject for a day or two. It was one of the odd facts of the Kenya Emergency that as soon as a Mau Mau killed a European everything came to a halt while troops, police, C.I.D., and all available senior officers hurried to the scene. This would happen quite regardless of the importance of the particular gang concerned compared with other gangs in the area. Earlier in the Emergency I used to object to this as being a most unmilitary way of doing business. Now I knew that it was hopeless to resist. It was far better to join in and take advantage of all the extra effort which would be made available, to eliminate the gang concerned. As a first step we decided to go to the scene and see if we could discover anything.

It was a lovely morning and as we drove along the murrum track leading from the main road to the scene of the murder I wished I was engaged in some better activity. We parked the Land-Rover by a number

of other vehicles and walked through long grass to where we could see a group of men standing on a rise in the ground.

As we got closer I was able to pick out who most of the people were. I saw the head of the C.I.D., some Special Branch men, the commander of a nearby police station, the C.I.D. photographers and an ambulance party. The assembled company were looking at a patch of bushes and I knew that it was in that direction my business lay. We had a good look at the bodies and then returned to our car. Neither Eric or I were in much doubt as to the origin of the killers. From the way in which the deed had been done we knew that they had come from one of Waruingi's gangs, though what they were doing so near Nairobi was not clear. It could conceivably have been the work of one of the main gangs though it was more likely to have been done by a small local party who were acting as liaison between Waruingi and the city. Either way it would involve a careful check on the known contact points on the south and west side of Nairobi.

For the rest of that day and most of the next we made no progress. Then the F.I.A. from Southern Province—John Sprague—working with a police inspector in charge of one of the Nairobi stations, managed to catch two terrorists actually in the city. Sprague took them straight to Karure where the D.M.I.O. of Kiambu and the F.I.A.s got to work.

Walter Gash had unfortunately left and a new man called Peter Hewett had just taken over as D.M.I.O. Luckily he made up in energy what he lacked in experience, and anyhow the other F.I.A.s and ex-terrorists had all the necessary knowledge for interrogating the captives. They soon discovered that the prisoners were from a small group of Kiambu men who lived on the outskirts of Nairobi. They were, as we had expected, a contact group between Waruingi and the Kiambu community in Nairobi. By good luck or good management Sprague had collared the gang leader and his second-in-command as they were going on one of their periodic visits to the Committee in the city.

At first they would not say anything about the murder of the boys but Hewett did not mind that. From what we had seen we were sure enough that it would prove to be the same people. Anyway we were much more interested in destroying the gang as such than in apprehending murderers. Once again the interrogating technique of putting ex-terrorists on to the job worked and by early the following morning the two prisoners felt themselves to be part of our team. When Peter set out to track down the gang, the leader was one of the most enthusiastic of the hunters.

The day's operations were extremely rewarding and by evening almost

the whole gang had been captured. There was a fair amount of shooting but no one was badly hurt. The battle, such as it was, ranged up and down the valley behind the Prince of Wales' School in Nairobi suburbia. Every now and then businessmen would come to the back windows of their houses to see what all the fuss was about but they usually got behind suitable cover when they saw what was going on. Some came dashing out with shot-guns and that was alarming because I, at any rate, felt that there were already too many firearms for such a confined area.

It did not take long for us to discover that these terrorists had murdered the two boys. "We even recovered the airgun which they had stolen at the time of the killings. In the end they were all hanged.

I was sorry about the gang leader in a way, as he was a cheery soul and very co-operative. Like Nyaga he made no attempt to avoid hanging, as he said he was always sure that he would end in that way. I asked him why he killed the boys, and he told me how his gang had been sitting in the bushes sunning themselves when they suddenly appeared with a gun. Naturally the terrorists attacked to get hold of the weapon which, not realizing it was an airgun, they thought to be valuable. Having done this they dared not let the boys go in case they gave information to the police. The gang leader finished up by asking me whether our troops in the forest would have let two armed terrorists go even if they had been young. I had seen too many bodies of Mau Mau aged fifteen or so to pursue the argument any further. I had already decided in my own mind that it was rebellion which was wrong. It is no use trying to be critical of the individual incidents which civil war brings in its wake. What is foul murder from one point of view may be an unavoidable unpleasantness from another and even a triumph from a third.

As soon as affairs returned to normal we arranged for Eric's patrol to go into the forest as planned. He decided that on the first occasion he would take only a very small party and confine himself to a reconnaissance role. We had recently acquired a terrorist who had been R.S.M. to Waruingi's personal gang and Eric decided to take him along, even though we had not previously tried him in a contact. Matenjagua was our most experienced forest terrorist, so he would go as gang leader and Eric took one of his own loyalists—probably Kimani, who had become his greatest friend in the team since the death of Chebere.

On April 30th Eric left Kamiti and established himself in a Kikuyu Guard post in Gatundu Division at Gacharage. He intended to try and get some information from the villages along the forest edge and to go in when he thought there was a gang nearby. A couple of days later I went

to see if anything had turned up and found that he had gone that morning after hearing that a large gang had recently been out in the Reserve collecting food. I did not like the part about the gang being a large one but was relieved to hear that the local D.O. Kikuyu Guard, Jim Dickenson who was a great friend of Eric's, had gone in with him.

The next three days were difficult ones for me, and I spent a lot of time wondering how Eric and Matenjagua were getting on. When we first started the pseudo gang system I had often been worried, but gradually I had got used to seeing Eric go out and come back again in one piece. Now, with a new technique being tried for the first time, my old fears returned. In fact if I had known what was going on I should have had some excuse for my alarm.

Our patrol at first found no signs of the gang previously reported as being in the Reserve. Eric and his men moved up a valley for the first day and found an old hide which had been abandoned some time earlier. Next day they found tracks of a few men but lost them again. On the third day they left their camp in the morning and started to move down another valley back in the direction of the Reserve.

Shortly before noon they were moving fast down a ridge track, that is to say a path made by animals along the top of a ridge. They had given up hope of contacting a gang and were intending to return to Gacharage that evening. Eric was in front when, without warning, he suddenly found himself in a clearing occupied by a very large group of terrorists.

The Mau Mau were having a halt on what was obviously a long journey through the forest. They were taken by surprise. Eric was not dressed up and it would be no exaggeration to say that he too was taken by surprise. Had he tried to withdraw he and the patrol would have been overrun. Had he thought for one second, the hesitation would have given the terrorists the chance of killing him where he stood. Eric, however, seldom did much thinking and in this case he reacted with the same instinctive precision as a hunter on walking into his quarry. Hoping that Waruingi's ex-R.S.M. would back him up, he charged straight into the gang yelling at the top of his voice. He was accompanied without hesitation by the rest of the patrol.

The gang were amazed. Not even the maddest Bwana would attack a gang of sixty unless he had a good force at his back. For one moment they hesitated but then they broke up and plunged down the side of the ridge firing as they went. The bullets went into the trees or the ground or perhaps into the air.

Dickenson and Eric Holyoak did not waste their time firing. They had

anticipated the scramble down the bank and knew that to stand and shoot would be worthless, as the targets would have disappeared into the bushes before they had got their weapons into the aim. Instead they too scrambled down the bank in a desperate attempt to reach the bottom first. For one moment the gang and our patrol were inextricably mixed up in a wild plunge down the slope. By the time our men reached the bottom, some of the terrorists were already across the stream and disappearing into the trees beyond, but there were still some targets available.

In the next few moments Eric and Jim Dickenson killed three of the terrorists and wounded several more. At one moment while Eric was shooting downstream, a gangster who had remained hiding in the undergrowth some five yards behind, appeared and might well have succeeded in finishing him off. Matenjagua saw the man's black face appear but was powerless to do more than shout a warning. As he did so he saw the terrorist's head explode as though a mine had burst inside the skull. At that moment Waruingi's ex-R.S.M. appeared with a broad grin and a shotgun. He had proved true to his new friends.

The whole action lasted only for a few seconds: certainly it took less time to happen than it has taken to read. No sooner had the terrorists disappeared than Eric and his patrol moved off. The gang would not take long to discover that the patrol was weak on the ground. Their normal practice was to reform at a suitable hide a few hundred yards away and then to close up behind the troops to see what was going on.

Before leaving the area of the contact Eric and Jim searched the bodies and went through all the kit. There was a lot of food and some cloth, newly collected from contacts in the Reserve. There were also documents from which we discovered that the enemy were from Nganga Kamehe's gang.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the action was a great Security Force victory but on the other hand our men had good cause for satisfaction, as seven of them had fooled a gang of sixty-four into running away. They had killed four, wounded several more and captured all the kit. The success was due to the superb leadership of Eric and Dickenson, no doubt, but it is worth remembering that they were backed up and followed by five Kikuyu. Some people say that the Kikuyu are a tribe of cowards.

I saw Eric when he returned to Kamiti that evening but he did not say much about the patrol except that he had killed four terrorists and recovered some documents. My interest was immediately taken up with the documents and that same evening we took them to Karure for Peter

Hewett's men to translate. My attention was thus diverted from the details of the patrol. I heard the story from Matenjagua a few evenings later. I had gone into his hut to gossip with him and he told me the details as he fried himself a chapathee over his charcoal fire.

Eric did not stay long at Kamiti but returned to Gacharage and tried the forest again from May 13th. This time he did not succeed in killing any terrorists but he produced some useful information. Later in the month he again went in and stayed away for nearly a week.

It was quite evident by this time that pseudo patrols would have to operate in the Kiambu forest if we were ever to get good information on Waruingi's gangs. It was also evident that Eric could not do all these patrols. Once again he had pioneered the technique but the sooner he taught the other F.I.A.s the better. In fact Eric had taken one other F.I.A. in with him on his second and third trips. I was now keen to go myself to see what the job was like. I realized that I could never be much use at the work but at least I should try it, so as to make certain that our other F.I.A.s were learning the right ideas. Next time Eric would have to take me with him, poor man!

There was astonishment in the yard when the news got around that Mbuthia (Eric) was taking the Bwana Major (me) on the next outing. It was one thing to have me present when meeting a gang by night as there was such chaos anyway that my ignorance of the language would not make much difference. By day in the forest it might be more difficult. Anyhow I was coming, so Matenjagua packed up my kit and prepared for the worst.

We left Kamiti at about three in the morning in order to cross the forest boundary in the dark. We had dressed up before leaving the house: I remember I was wearing a polo-necked sweater under a ragged mackintosh with a blanket rolled across my chest like a bandolier. I had a string of Mau Mau beads round my neck and carried a simi. If we met a gang I would be kept well to the rear. I was to be half recruit and half idiot in the hope of being wholly ignored. Naturally I could not carry a firearm while acting that part but I kept my pistol tucked away in a shoulder holster in case of trouble.

We left the Land-Rover hidden in the Reserve and entered the forest at half-past-five. Matenjagua led, followed by Eric. I came next in the line followed by Kihara, then a harlot of the permanent staff, with another ex-terrorist in the rear. There was a mist on the ground and it was very cold as we struck out into the forest.

Within ten minutes my feet were wet from crossing a stream. This

happened at regular intervals throughout the day. Within a quarter of an hour I was exhausted by climbing up the steep side of the valley through which ran the stream. As the minutes went by I should have seen more as my eyes became accustomed to the dark. In fact I saw less as my horizon drew nearer and nearer to my feet. I could not recognize the other people in the party but I could tell Eric and Matenjagua by their smell, also the woman. The other two I could not tell apart. Being dark I imagined them all as I knew them at Kamiti. It eventually did become light despite the dense ceiling of greenery and then I noticed that I was not walking along with Eric and Matenjagua and Kihara but with a Mau Mau gang. I was a Mau Mau myself. For the first time in daylight I actually saw us as a gang. I began to think like a Mau Mau—or so I thought.

As the day wore on this feeling of being what I was pretending to be, increased. Matenjagua was acting as gang leader and I began to believe that he really was a gang leader. I almost expected him to halt the patrol and call one of us to task for some disciplinary offence. I had often read in captured documents of the penalties for leaving the line of march or making a noise; of making love to a female terrorist or speaking to one of the elders without due respect. The penalties varied of course, but they all included a good walloping with the Kaboko. Matenjagua carried a kaboko but he never used it. With James things would have been different. He was very keen on punishing all breaches of discipline 'in case anyone was watching'.

For most of the morning we continued to push our way through the forest but found nothing much except some old tracks which had been made by a small gang. We even found one or two places where they had rested. As the sun got up the temperature rose until it was really quite hot. We were soon sweating from our exertions. It was always one of the biggest problems to know how to carry enough to keep warm at night without dying of exhaustion by day: there was often frost between midnight and dawn.

During the afternoon we found a Mau Mau hide which had been used within the past few days by a gang of two or three. The ash in the fire was still white and there was a trace of warmth in the embers. This seemed more hopeful but we failed to find any terrorists that day. By about four o'clock we had done enough so we stopped for the night.

We chose a place which had been used as a hide by a gang some weeks earlier. This had the advantage of a ready-made fireplace and flattened areas on which to make our beds. In their permanent camps the gangs made shelters of bamboo and leaves but when on the move they contented

themselves with getting under the most waterproof looking trees they could find. We were pretending to be a gang in passage, so we had to sleep without cover.

The terrorists usually waited until darkness fell before making a fire to cook because by day the smoke might *give* them away. Sometimes if they had had a good fire in the night they might continue with it after dawn but if so they would only burn charcoal which makes no smoke. Even the normal fire was designed to be extinguished rapidly should the need arise. Several long logs would be laid down like spokes of a wheel. The fire would then burn where the logs met, that is to say at the hub of the wheel. As the wood became used one only had to push the log further in. By this means once the fire was lit there was no more to be done other than push in the logs as required. When you wanted the fire to go out you merely pulled the logs outwards until their burning ends were clear of the fire.

Feeding was a troublesome affair for us and I believe the Mau Mau found the same. Certainly from captured documents and from interrogation it was apparent that more feuds started as a result of unfair sharing of food than from any other cause. One of Waruingi's most distinguished generals was involved for months in a legal case with a member of his gang who accused him of misappropriating a few ounces of kimbo (cooking fat).

Normal food for forest terrorists would be maize and, when available, meat. They very often carried their rations in a satchel and looking inside captured satchels was almost as revolting a job as checking new recruits at a medical centre before the sergeant-major has had a proper chance to get them clean. I cannot remember what we had with us but it was probably some freshly killed goat's meat and a few maize cobs. In fact meat skewered on a twig and toasted over the embers is delicious, at any rate for the first few days. Kikuyu corn on the cob roasted in the fire is likely to be a disappointment for sweet corn addicts and a toasted husk stuck between the teeth keeps one busy with a matchstick for the rest of the evening.

Cooking cannot start until after dark, as I have explained, but as the light fades there are prayers to be said. Eric had forgotten to teach me the correct way to pray so I was taken slightly by surprise when we started to go through the rigmarole. First we formed up in file, that is to say two abreast facing in the direction of Mount Kenya, which is the dwelling place of the Kikuyu god Ngai. Next we took a handful of earth—Kikuyu land—in our left hands and raised our simis in a threatening manner with our right hand. Matenjagua as gang leader then proceeded to lecture Ngai

on various subjects. At the end of each sentence we all said "Thai Thai Thai\*" or something like it, which means 'praise'.

Naturally I had no idea what it was that Matenjagua was asking Ngai to do on our behalf but it evidently entailed a certain amount of unpleasantness for the Government, Europeans in general and above all Africans who had failed in their obligations to the movement. Despite the sincerity with which we said our "Thais" I had the feeling that Ngai was not paying attention. He could hardly be blamed as Kihara, Eric and I were Christians and the other three were pretty shaky in their allegiance to the old regime.

After our meal the men settled down to a gossip but I could take no part as Eric was being Mbuthia and would not talk English. It was one of the very few occasions on which I regretted not being able to speak the language, and I can well remember feeling a bit out of things as I sat close to my friends but yet so far away. After a time we wrapped ourselves in our blankets and tried to sleep.

All day I had resented the weight of my blanket but now I wished it was two. Luckily it did not rain and by lying close to the others I managed to keep warm enough to get some sleep. I should, however, be exaggerating my ability to survive the elements if I said that I slept like a top all night, for I did no such thing.

Next morning we were up before dawn and packed our kit ready to move by the time it got light. We weren't in any hurry, but we had to follow the drill of the gangs in case any real terrorists came along. Once we were ready to go we sat around for some time.

By now I had been in the forest as a terrorist for twenty-four hours but already it seemed as though my life outside belonged to another creation. The forest is so completely different; going inside I got the same feeling as I do when goggle fishing. Everything is strange for the first few moments then after a time normal existence seems strange.

The forest is strange because it looks unlike the outside world. The skyline, as a rule, is no further away than a few feet and the light is reflected equally from below and beside one as well as from above. It is strange because it sounds unlike the outside world. There is a solid background of soft noises which add up to little less than a din. As a result it is not easy to register the sharp and unusual noises when they do occur. Forest-craft probably involves learning to understand noise more than anything else.

The forest is also strange because of the limitations it sets on movement.

One seldom moves on the flat; there is usually a precipice of one sort or another which is often more of a limiting factor than the vegetation. There are branches to knock your hat off backwards or thorns to pull it forward over your eyes. There are brambles and bracken and bamboo and creeper and more or less every other form of natural obstacle that you can think of. There are also large leaves which hold about half a pint of rain or dew each. They usually manage to tip their load down your neck if you get near enough.

The forest is strange because of the other creatures that are there. The Kenya forest, unlike the jungles of Asia, is teeming with life, ranging from ants up through hyrax, duiker, bushbuck, monkeys to buffalo, rhino and elephant. The bigger animals don't just exist in the guide books. Their presence is readily noticeable all over the forest and it is seldom that a patrol goes out without seeing or hearing game.

Finally the forest is strange because it smells so different from the outside world. To the amateur at least, smell is all important because one's sight and hearing are not capable of functioning with sufficient speed in the close confines of the trees. I soon learned to distinguish my men in the dark by their smell. I could pick up a fire and to some extent gauge how long an old one had been out by the smell of the ashes. I could recognize places by smell though this was apt to go wrong if two places had the same kind of plants nearby. Certainly the bigger animals gave away their position by their smell, and there is some difference between smells at different times of the day.

Personally I have never felt anything eerie or unpleasant about forests. I don't get the 'shut in' feeling, nor do I imagine myriads of creeping creatures which are not there. Naturally I object to being caught in thorns or stuck in decaying vegetation. Furthermore I object to being lost, though that never used to happen when in company with ex-terrorists. Above all I objected to the effect on my nasal membranes of the various pollens. My hay-fever is always at its worst after a night in the forest.

On this occasion hay-fever was a real bore. As we continued our journey next day I sneezed and sneezed. It was bad enough making the noise but even Mau Mau sneeze sometimes, so that our identity might not have been given away by that. What was far worse was that the blacking kept coming off the end of my nose. Every ten minutes or so I had to stop and re-apply paste from the tin I had in my pocket. As a boy I had always imagined myself disguised as a native getting valuable intelligence for the army. As a boy too I had always suffered from hay-fever. It's

rather odd that I had never thought of the effect the one would have on the other. Now I knew.

During the day we found several more camps. There was one on the side of a hill in thick bracken where a clearing had formed in the trees. This hide had obviously held a very large gang within the past three or four weeks. There were corn cobs, bones and cigarette packets lying around everywhere. At the top of the clearing was a look-out post from which the sentry could see the forest edge and then for miles over the Reserve to Nairobi and the plains beyond. On a clear day in Kenya one can see for miles and miles.

In the afternoon we found another hide containing a letter box with a recently written letter inside waiting for collection. These letters were the principal means of communication between gangs. Sometimes a courier would carry them direct from one leader to the other. More often the writer would leave his letter in a prearranged place where he knew the recipient would find it.

The manner of writing took some getting used to. Following the normal Kikuyu custom the writers did not come to the point until nearly the end of the letter. All the first part would be greetings or general remarks concerning the doings of Ngai. The letters had a ring of the Old Testament about them and were often unintentionally funny, though I dare say the humour was usually the result of bad translation.

The letter we found was from the leader of a small liaison group whose job was to link up the Passive Committee in the Reserve with the main gang for the area, led by Kinyiti Goko. The letter ran as follows:

To: The Honourable Elder General Kinyiti Goko.

Much greetings of Gikuyu and Mumbi. I face Kirinyaga to worship the Lord: Our God is great. But we were troubled badly by the Government and so we are staying in this wearisome state. I was once caught by the hands of seven Europeans but by the power of the Sacred Ostrich they didn't succeed.

We then besieged five Europeans but they escaped and we ran away. I was with Mbaria and by God's help I made a narrow squeak because the European was about to catch me.

After this no more trouble. We are now at Rari in the middle, but my heart suffers from bitter desolation as I hear that you are nearby but don't see you. While you know that I wandered with you much at one time.

I want you to come with the pistol which was at Kanyawa. Don't

leave it, for if I was with it, it would be fairer. You can remain with the pistol which was from Kamahia.

Much greetings from all persons,  
Praise, Praise God, Praise  
Songuru.

This whole letter is merely asking Kinyiti Goko for one pistol from his gang. No wonder we nearly went mad if we got a whole bag full of such stuff to translate and evaluate at speed.

In this case the letter was of little value to us. It confirmed that Songuru with his liaison group was living in that part of the forest and it confirmed that he was working on behalf of General Kinyiti's gang. It showed that for a time at least the two groups had been out of touch with each other, but that frequently happened. Anyway the date of the letter was about two weeks earlier, so they could have achieved their meeting by now.

We carried on with our patrol but failed to contact any of the gangs known to be in the area. That evening the men decided to sing a few songs to keep up their spirits. The gangs often did so round their fires. They would sing of Jomo Kenyatta and their other political leaders. They sang of the land and of their longing to be rid of the Bwanas. In fact most of the Kikuyu were glad of the presence of the white men really but there is a difference between one's logically worked-out interests and one's emotional needs as seen through a mist of subdued song round the camp fire.

As we sang I too began to feel that we should rise and kill the whites. My hand was in Matenjagua's and we pledged ourselves to recover the land. We finished with the hymn 'Jesu lover of my soul' only it was Jomo's bosom to which we had to fly in the second line.

That night, as I lay looking up into the darkness with Eric on one side and Matenjagua on the other, I thought again of the gulf which separated my life as a member of the Nairobi Area Provincial Emergency Committee from my present existence in the forest. I went on to think of the gap that separated our leaders from those of the Mau Mau. No wonder we found it so hard to catch up with them. How could we work out what they would choose to do next or how they would react? I had been successful compared to many, but that was not enough. I had failed compared to what I should have done. Waruingi was still alive and I had been after him for eighteen months or more.

The cold pushed up from underneath and I wished that I could sleep so as not to feel it. Unfortunately I could only think. I liked to dwell on



my successes even though they were really not mine at all but Eric's or Jacky Miller's, Gash's, pfenning's, Prophet's or Cottar's. I wondered if perhaps some of my good fortune might have been due to the fact that I did think just a little bit more like a terrorist than some of our commanders. If that was so this present trip would not have been wasted as I had certainly learnt a lot about their way of life.

Half an hour later I was still awake and still thinking. I was trying to work out how much my ideas and mental processes had changed. Was I really thinking like a terrorist? The thought was ridiculous but I suddenly remembered my feelings two or three hours earlier when singing hymns of hate against the white men. How did I feel so completely contented and at one with Matenjagua? That was really going a bit far. Admittedly I had taught myself not to feel any animosity or revulsion towards the Mau Mau for their deeds or their oaths or their ways, but it seemed I had succeeded too well.

I had of course been living an unusual existence for the past two years. I had spent most of my time with Africans. I wondered how much of the African mentality I had absorbed. Was I becoming callous and ruthless and treacherous—to mention some of their less attractive characteristics? In the sharp darkness of the Kikuyu forest it was easier than ever to feel the influence of Ngai and Mau Mau and Africa. Perhaps the spirit of the oath really did exist and was crawling over me in spite of the way in which I had mocked it?

It was my second night out, so regardless of my speculations about Ngai and company I slept quite well. I woke to hear the Colobus monkeys crashing around in the tree tops and had no more time to bother about oaths and spirits.

## SPECIAL FORCES

W\_/HOR.TLY after my journey into the forest I found myself involved in a major policy argument in Nairobi about the handling of pseudo operations. Basically speaking the controversy arose because certain people thought that these operations should be run by the Operations Branch of the Security Forces while others thought that they should be handled by the Intelligence Branch.

The advocates of the second alternative based their argument on the fact that pseudo gang operations could only work when backed by the very best information. Furthermore it had been our organization in Special Branch which had pioneered and developed the whole performance, so why change it at this late date? Strangely enough it was the senior officers in Special Branch who were most keen to get the business taken over by the operations men, because they were always nervous of the lack of security which such operations would bring.

The argument had in fact been going on for a long time. In the preceding December I had attended a meeting in G.H.Q. at which we had tried to work out a formula which would satisfy both parties, that is to say one that would pass the responsibility to the Operations Branch whilst ensuring that there was a sufficiently close tie-up between the sources of information and the teams on the ground.

At our meeting in December we had not succeeded in finding an answer, because the operational case had been overstated. The intention

had been to tie a pseudo spearhead to an ordinary military patrol, which was useless. A paper solution appeared some time later but it was never really tried because it was obviously unpractical. General Erskine probably realized it and merely allowed the old method, which was then at the height of its success, to carry on.

General Erskine left just about the time of the patrol on which Eric contacted the sixty-four. Since December the pseudo technique had developed considerably. In the forest the offensive side of the business had become more important at the expense of the intelligence side and the pressure increased for reorganizing the forces engaged in these patrols on an operational basis.

As the founder of the idea I was invited to give my views. On the whole I was in favour of the party who wanted to set up an operational control for the forces engaged in these operations. I accepted the Special Branch misgivings about handling such an obviously offensive weapon and I felt that a proper centralized control of organization and training would help to develop what was obviously going to become the chief means of killing Mau Mau in the forest.

On the other hand I was quite sure that the teams when formed should stay in their own areas, controlled at District H.Q. by their own leader as a member of the District Emergency Committee, based firmly on the static organization of F.I.A.s who would have to provide the information. I also felt that each pseudo gang needed so much detailed knowledge of the particular gang it was operating against, that it would be senseless to try switching it from one part of the country to the other merely to fit in with the operational plan.

I wrote a paper in which I gave my views on the subject, and took part in a number of discussions at G.H.Q. with staff officers. In the end I was told to come to a meeting on June 4th which would be attended, amongst others, by the new Commander-in-Chief and the Commissioner of Police. The question was to be finally decided then.

When I turned up I was somewhat surprised to find a vast concourse assembled, very few of whom could be concerned with my problem. When I read the agenda I saw that we were to discuss a number of other points as well. The meeting was described as a free-for-all exchange of ideas on operational methods and I noticed that pseudo gangs were well down at the bottom of the list.

Not greatly worried, I settled down to listen. I thought that when the time came I should be told to give my views on pseudo gangs and had been led to believe that there would be little opposition. I noticed that I

was the only person present with any practical experience of the subject so I did not imagine anyone else would be particularly interested. I must say that by June 1955 there were a lot of people who had plenty of experience and that there was no particular reason why I should have been chosen to talk, except that I was the senior officer with personal knowledge and I was living near Nairobi.

I enjoyed the first part of the conference. We were given an excellent outline of the situation in the Colony by the head of Special Branch—by that time Mr Prendergast. There were talks on military measures and normal police work. Major Ven Fey from the Kinangop, who had pioneered and taught the technique of tracking in conjunction with combat, spoke on his subject and one of the police tracker-team leaders also spoke. Several people had some good ideas and General Lathbury drew them out skilfully. There were some damn silly ideas as well which received a great deal more consideration than they deserved.

My only worry was the time. As the morning wore on the interior of the hut got hotter but the discussion got no nearer my item on the agenda. Opposite me I saw a continuous row of faces above a continuous row of medals. There were military faces and police faces and even a few civilian ones. There were ash trays and cigarette ends in ever increasing piles. There were masses and masses of words and laughter and contradictions, agreements and even yawns, but no decisions. Gradually I realized that nothing serious was being discussed at all. The plans had been made beforehand. We were wasting that most valuable commodity: time.

At about half-past-twelve my item came up. There was no time left for discussion so we skipped that and went straight into the decision. One of the senior officers—probably the Commissioner of Police—read out a plan for the operation of pseudo gangs in the forest. The new organization was to be called 'Special Forces' which was the name we had used in all our discussions and in my paper, so I thought for a moment that it was merely my plan.

As I listened carefully I realized that it was indeed very largely the same course as I proposed but for one important difference. The force was to be centralized near Nyeri not only for training, which would have been a good thing, but also for operations. A District Emergency Committee would call for a team when it wanted one, which would operate there for a while and then return to base to wait for another call. This was the very worst thing that could happen, to my way of thinking, because the teams would have to work with inadequate detailed knowledge of the area and of the gangs against whom they were working.

I started to collect my thoughts supposing I would be asked to speak, but before I was ready the meeting broke up. Shaken, I walked out into the sunlight. The other members of the meeting went over to the mess for a drink and I looked round to see whom I could talk to about the obvious error which had been made. I had actually seen my baby—named Special Forces—brought into the world without legs. I had been in labour for at least six months (as opposed to the more usual period) and now this had happened. If General Erskine had been present I felt things would have been different. If John Holmes had been in his old job he would have prevented it, but he too had gone. I was surrounded by a colossal weight of inexperience and I had no choice but to watch the thing go wrong. I moved off to Kamiti and consoled myself by playing draughts with Kimani, who tactfully lost as usual.

My initial reaction had been too pessimistic, no doubt. I had taken the worst possible view of the situation, probably because my pride had been wounded. Instead of thinking about all I had done in the past I should have got to my feet and made a bid to influence the future. Anyhow there were lots of good points about the new scheme. It is easy to see all that now but at the time I felt very differently. I had almost completed two gruelling years. I had built up a position of great influence so far as operational techniques were concerned and now one of the most important of them had been torn away from me and handed to someone else. This in fact was only the latest of a number of such occurrences though none of the others had been so spectacular or obvious. If I had been stronger or fresher I would have struggled to regain the initiative. As it was I left the Colony stage with as good a grace as I could muster, and decided to confine myself to Central Province South for the remaining few months of my tour in Kenya.

For the first time since arriving in the Colony I had not got too much to do. I was virtually debarred from further activity at the Colony level, not only because of the change in personalities mentioned but also because the Training Centre had closed down and I no longer received F.I.A.s from the other provinces to train. Furthermore I had ended my association with Southern Province some months earlier. That left me with Nairobi Area only.

In Nairobi Area there was only one thing that really interested me. Waruingi and his Kiambu gangs. Thika was very quiet and I hardly had anything more to do there except see that the D.M.I.O. and F.I.A.s were properly looked after. Nairobi itself was also quiet and well under control.

Towards the end of June, Peter Hewett moved his camp from Karure



Don Bush



Pete van Aardt

to Ndumberi, a small village about two miles west of Kiambu. By doing so he moved much nearer to the District H.Q. and was more centrally placed in the District. The new camp was similar to Karure, being a collection of several shops surrounded by wire. All the Kiambu F.I.A.s and their teams lived there except for the Gatundu men who continued to stay in their Division. It was from this post that Hewett with his men, aided by Eric and our team, started the final phase of tracking down Waruingi.

During June Eric and Pete van Aardt carried out further patrols in the forest designed to find out exactly how Waruingi's gangs were split up and stationed. On July 5th I went to Ndumberi and settled down with Peter Hewett to work out exactly what the position was.

Peter's office was in one of the shops. The surrounding buildings were used as living quarters for the teams, the F.I.A.s and informers. In one corner was an extra strong stone building in which we cast the prisoners. They were guarded by ex-terrorists who would make sure that no one got out until he had joined our party or was passed on to the police. The ex-terrorists could not afford to have people aware of their identity hostile to them and at large, so there were no successful escapes from Ndumberi.

Peter's office was divided down the middle. One half served as the living-room and dining-room. In the other half were the maps and files and card indexes. So great was the quantity of information gathered by the Kiambu F.I.A.s since Gash had got the District properly organized some fourteen months earlier that we now needed two full-time European clerks in addition to all the translators and African scribes.

As a result of our discussion we were able to get a very good idea of the gang layout.

We decided that we had a large gang from Fort Hall in the forest off Matara in the north of the District. Ever since the days of General Kago, Fort Hall gangs had used this part of the Kiambu forest, but it did seem as though the present lot had settled there for good. It was a large gang and we would certainly have to attack it by military forces in order to break it up.

Also in the forest off Gatundu Division were two of Waruingi's gangs under Nganga Kamehe and Kiarii Munuthia respectively. Kiarii was one of Waruingi's original men but not a very effective leader. We knew Nganga, an older man, to be popular and astute.

Round Limuru and Ngobi forest were two more gangs belonging to Gitimu Ndiguire and Kamwana. Gitimu was the senior general in Waruingi's force.

H



Pseudo gang



Pseudo gang at prayers

We estimated that the biggest single group was in the area of the Lari forest and uplands under the command of Generals Kinyiti Goko and Mburu Mukono. Kinyiti was a very dangerous young man of twenty-four. From his pictures we knew him to be big and handsome. Prisoners said he was the cruellest of the Kiambu terrorists but also the man with the most influence over his gang. It was obvious that the people we had taken from this group had all been glad to be his subordinates, even though their expectation of life had been uncertain.

Altogether Waruingi's gangs numbered over two hundred; we knew who they were and roughly speaking where they were. The only puzzle was the Commander-in-Chief himself, Field Marshal Sir Waruingi Kurier, Knight Commander of the African Empire, Commander of the Kenya Inoru Army. He had last been heard of with Nganga Kamehe ten days earlier.

As I talked to Peter it became apparent that there was enough information available on which to base a large operation. There was no point in sending out further reconnaissance. Over the next few days I put our knowledge, such as it was, at the disposal of the military commander whose forces had been earmarked to do an operation in the area during the second half of July.

Operation Dante was one of the last full scale operations of the Emergency. Four battalions of troops, bombers, fighters and artillery were all to take part. Dante was the last of a series of such operations which had been going on in different parts of the Colony. As time went on they became less and less effective as the target became smaller. By July 1955 nearly everyone had realized that small patrols, pseudo gangs or tracker combat teams were the right answer for the remaining terrorists. Dante was to be the final fling of the old regime.

The military commander decided that he would confine the operation to the northern half of the Kiambu forest so that he could concentrate all his troops in a fairly small area. By our reckoning there should be over three hundred Mau Mau within the boundary of the operation including all the Fort Hall gang and two of Waruingi's groups at least, with the likelihood of the Headquarters being there as well.

On July 13th Eric and I went to the sawmill in the forest to visit Denis Kearney who had retired from the Kikuyu Guard and now worked for Kitch' Morson. We thought that he might be able to give us some information as to the latest moves of the gangsters in the area.

Denis had almost given up playing practical jokes on me by this time because he had used all his stock once and was too much of an artist to try

any a second time. As a half-hearted gesture he released a very belligerent turkey cock from somewhere and I was in the process of retiring from its fury when a car full of strange looking characters appeared in the open space behind the main shed.

We watched as three men and a woman climbed out and came towards us. They looked like Hollywood Kenya Settlers, that is to say they wore the cinema actor's version of the clothes worn by the white man in Africa. One had khaki drill shorts and jacket with slots for cartridges. Another had a large hat with a leopard skin band. I don't remember what the third one wore but the lady could have been Miss Gardner direct from the set of Mogambo except that—honesty compels me—she was slightly less beautiful.

I could see Denis was going to have hysterics and Eric was about to burst. I hurried off into the house not wanting to be involved. We all thought the party was from a film unit and fully expected to be asked where the nearest Hon was living.

Denis eventually went to talk to the strangers who turned out to be officers from a local unit disguised for a reconnaissance. One of them had brought a wife by way of adding local colour. In all fairness I must admit that they were as amazed at their clothes as we were. After all they weren't settlers and they had made an effort.

Next day I went to Fort Hall to make sure that the arrangements for passing information gained in the operation between the two districts were fully tied up. Operation Dante started on the following morning.

*Chapter Sixteen***OPERATION DANTE**

**B E F O R E** an operation starts in normal warfare, the commander first decides what it is he is going to do. Once he has got that straight he goes to have a look at the ground and the enemy position. That is to say, he makes a reconnaissance in order to obtain certain information at first hand. Next he gets a lot more information on the state of his own troops and those of the enemy from his staff. Finally, when he has enough facts to work on, he makes his plan. By sticking to a programme of this sort, even the stupidest man can make a workable plan, though whether he has the qualities of leadership and energy needed for its effective execution is a different matter.

Unfortunately in almost all cases soldiers fail to use a similar logical process when engaged in operations against bandits, because they do not take the trouble to adapt the system to the peculiar circumstances of the game. Let us assume that the commander is capable of deciding what it is he is trying to do, which incidentally is by no means always the case. His next job is to assemble the information which will enable him to decide how best to do it. When chasing bandits he cannot make a reconnaissance in the normal sense of the word because he cannot see the enemy from any point of vantage. They are split up in little bands throughout the forest or perhaps they are walking around in the Reserves. One bandit may well be emptying the rubbish out of his waste paper basket as he writes, while another is bringing his whisky and soda. Certainly he can go

and look at the ground and it is a very good thing for him to take a walk in the forest to see the sort of country in which his men will have to work, but that is hardly enough. In conventional warfare the commander gets first-hand knowledge of the important facts and gets the rest from his staff: he must do more than look at trees if he is to catch terrorists.

But if he can't look at the enemy position how can he get the important factors at first hand? What is the equivalent of a reconnaissance? The answer in my opinion is that the commander must get around and talk to the people who know the ways of the local terrorists. Let him talk to the chiefs and headmen, the district officers and D.O.'s K.G. Let him meet the F.I.A.s and the ex-bandits; let him look at the places where there have been contacts in the past. He can see on old maps where gangs have hidden before and where they have made their routes and tracks. He can see in what areas they like to get their food and he can take a look at the fields to see whether the corn is ripe here or whether there are good stocks of cattle there. Such research is the flesh and blood of bandit chasing. It is the essential information which the commander must have at first hand. This is reconnaissance.

While the commander is busy over such matters his staff can be getting the other facts ready for him. They can find out from intelligence reports who is in which gang, where the gang was last seen, how many rifles they have and how many sten-guns. They can tell him about timings, movement, feeding arrangements and so on. They can do a lot of things but they cannot offer a satisfactory alternative to personal examination of the problem by the commander. Luckily, in the case of Operation Dante the commander concerned had taken a lot of trouble and the plan which he finally made was practicable—just.

The operation was to take place in two phases. For the first week the soldiers would move in to a depth of about one thousand yards from the forest edge and lay as many ambushes as possible. Meanwhile aircraft and artillery would bombard the forest inside the cordon to drive the gangs outwards on to the ambush positions. This was a sound idea because a man lying stationary in ambush has a better chance of hitting a terrorist moving through the thick undergrowth than if he too is also moving. After a week the troops on the cordon would start to patrol inwards towards the area which had been bombarded.

The operation started on July 15th. I badly wanted to go to the forest edge and watch the soldiers slink into position in the first light of day but there were two meetings which I had to attend first. As soon as they were over I went to Ndumberi and picked up Peter Hewett. Together we drove

through Gatundu to the edge of the forest to see how the operation was going.

I always like seeing the first moves of an operation or exercise. There is something faintly dramatic about watching the leading troops setting out. They are hopeful and businesslike, their arms and accoutrements clean. The atmosphere is even more impressive if the first moves are made at dawn or at dusk.

On this occasion we had missed the best and we arrived at a very unglamorous time, that is to say about six hours after the operation had begun. The long lines of fighting soldiers had vanished into the forest several hours before and instead we merely got covered in mud by the lorries which were moving into the newly-set-up company bases on the Reserve edge. In Battalion H.Q. the Colonel was no doubt experiencing a similar sense of anti-climax. He would have watched the men move in and have felt relieved to see them at the right place at the right time. For several hours his thoughts would have been fixed on the enemy and the possibilities of success. By the time we arrived he had returned to his headquarters and his thoughts had been jerked back to reality by a number of fiddling reports and requests as they came through on the wireless from company commanders who had suddenly remembered things which they had forgotten or who wanted to be told what to do about a thousand minute matters of detail.

Our first call was to 26 K. A.R. at Matara. The headquarters was in the exact place where General Kago had set fire to the Kikuyu Guard post eighteen months before. Two askaris were digging a latrine a short way off in the same bushes through which Kago's gang withdrew, leaving their trail of blood.

Peter and I talked to the Colonel for a short time but we hardly expected results so soon and were more concerned with seeing, for future reference, where everyone was. As we talked, some aircraft flew over and we heard the bombs dropping in the trees behind us. A few moments later the aircraft flew back over their target firing their machine guns but we could not see anything from where we were.

After a time we drove off down the track which links Matara on the east of the forest with Njabini to the west. Although the worst of the rains were over the track was very bad and we only just got through to the new dam which was in the process of being built. Nearby was the headquarters of the 1st Gloucesters.

The situation at the Gloucesters' H.Q. was very much the same as at 26 K.A.R. except that the Colonel was away. We had a talk with the

Intelligence Officer and moved on to Brigade H.Q. which was set up in a field near the Njabini airstrip.

Next we drove south down to the west side of the forest over the European farms of the South Kinangop. At one point we passed the field in which the guns were lined up firing into the bamboo several thousand yards to the east. Soon afterwards we left the South Kinangop and again entered the forest running along a track just inside it, to Klein's Camp, where 1st King's Shropshire Light Infantry had their headquarters.

We were lucky to find the Colonel in and with him was the Colonel of the Gloucesters. We stayed for about half an hour discussing which gang each battalion might find opposite it and then we pushed off.

The next leg of our journey was back through the forest to the Kiambu Reserve. We drove first to Kinari where, nearly two years earlier, I had met D.O. Cumber directing the first operation I had ever attended. From there we travelled along the track to Kitch's mill and on to the H.Q. of the Irish Fusiliers who had made their camp just outside the forest in the Gatundu Reserve. Once more we were lucky in finding the Colonel in.

By now it was getting dark, so we returned to Kiambu. We had travelled about one hundred miles, most of which was over the terrible Reserve roads and some on the even worse ones through the forest. We had achieved nothing very concrete but we had seen where each of the battalions were living and we had broken the ice. It is a strange fact that of all the different sorts of Security Forces the Army was the most difficult for the F.I.A.s to get to know. The British battalions were outside the union: their leaders had not been to the Prince of Wales', and the F.I.A.s would not work with them until they got used to them. Luckily the battalions on Operation Dante were very friendly and good with our people but apart from 26 K.A.R. they were new to the area. Ice-breaking was a very important part of my job.

Next day I went round the battalions again. This time Eric came with me. Our first visit was to a company of the Irish Fusiliers who were going into the forest in the area of Nganga Kamehe's section. Their trackers were all Embus from Mount Kenya, so we lent them Waruingi's ex-R.S.M. for a few days to show them the land.

Afterwards Eric and I went to a Kikuyu Guard post for a bite of lunch and then we watched the bombing from the watch-tower. To be honest it was not an impressive sight though it probably did what was required. Every now and again a few Harvards would fly in over our heads and drop their bombs. They would then sweep off into the clouds and disappear, after which there would be a long pause before the next lot

arrived. There had been one or two contacts with gangs during the previous night but nothing of much interest.

Thereafter on most days Eric and I went round the battalions taking part in Operation Dante. The ambushes soon started contacting terrorists and there were well over thirty small actions in the first four days. Unfortunately very few Mau Mau died and once more we found ourselves face to face with the unpalatable fact that the army of that time was not efficient at killing terrorists in the forests. In the first thirty-six contacts only eight Mau Mau were killed.

Later great strides were made towards improving the efficiency of the soldiers and new tactics were evolved. The large operations ceased and the soldiers spent more and more of their time on small patrols using the tracker combat techniques previously developed by Ven Fey.

After a week the battalions started to move in towards the centre. From documents and the recognition of bodies we had identified a number of gangs in the north and west of the forest. They were almost all Fort Hall groups. The battalion operating in Waruingi's area had killed no one, though they had once surprised a small gang washing in one of the streams. Peter Hewett and I both reckoned that most of the Mau Mau had left before the second stage of the operation started but that there was still a worth-while target in the area. This proved to be the case and during the next few days the rate of kills went up slightly.

I was getting rather worried by this time. Operation Dante had been quite a success in many ways. There had been a lot of contacts and the Mau Mau had certainly been properly stirred up. On the other hand casualties had been light and information scanty. I could not put my patrols into the forest while the operation continued and meanwhile we had completely lost track of Waruingi. We badly needed a prisoner.

While Operation Dante was moving inexorably forward, events elsewhere were comparatively quiet. A small gang had been reported from the Lari Forest, well to the south of the main operation, and there had been an interesting new tactical idea developed by the District Officers in Limuru. In this Division there were a lot of thick but small and isolated areas of forest which gave very good cover for gangs. There was also an unlimited amount of labour from the Reserves nearby. Someone had the idea of lining up the people shoulder to shoulder and cutting down the cover when it was known that a gang was present. When the idea was first suggested it sounded ridiculous. Whoever heard of cutting down a forest to find the people hiding in it? Quite apart from everything else one would need several thousand people to clear quite a small area. But



Eric Holyoak



the first time the D.O. tried what was later known as the 'Population sweep' he found that it worked. Four terrorists were flushed and shot by Kikuyu Guard walking in the line of cutters. Unfortunately we could not identify the bodies because the cutters, who were mostly women, carved them into tiny pieces and scattered them over almost an acre.

Then, right at the end of July, a police patrol working near Kinari on the southern edge of Operation Dante captured three terrorists. We took them to Ndumberi that same evening and by midnight we had them talking freely. For the first time for a fortnight we knew roughly what was going on.

It transpired that Waruingi had been with Kiarii Munuthia's section opposite Gatundu when Operation Dante started. He had stayed there for some time until he had heard that Gitimu Ndiguire was in difficulties in the south of Kiambu and wanted to speak to him. He had left a few days earlier with his personal gang though Kiarii Munuthia and Nganga Kamehe had both stayed in their own areas. The prisoners had no idea at all that there was a big operation on and they had never been molested until they had walked into the police patrol while going to collect vegetables from an old plantation near Kinari.

We now knew enough to realize that our interest no longer lay primarily in Operation Dante. Waruingi had gone south.

Two days later Eric went into the Lari Forest to see if there were any signs of Kinyiti Goko in that place. We knew well enough that Waruingi would join up with him after seeing Gitimu rather than return at once to the Dante area. The Githunguri F.I.A., Gordon Bell, had been largely responsible for the interrogation of the prisoners and he accompanied Eric into the forest.

A day or two later Eric was out. There was every indication that Kinyiti Goko was still in the western edge of the Lari Forest. He had also seen signs of our friend Songuru at the eastern end.

The first week of August was pretty tense for all of us and fairly busy as well, because Operation Dante was still in progress and this meant frequent journeys round the area. By the 10th of August we had received more information to confirm the presence of a gang in the Lari Forest. There was also a sudden lack of information from Gitimu's area which indicated that he might have left. The F.I.A. who looked after Gitimu was Mick Green and he was sure he was no longer at home.

Peter Hewett was responsible for working out all the implications of the affair, not me. I should have been in Nairobi most of the time and indeed I was there far more than I liked. Unfortunately for Peter the scent



Waruingi Kurier

of Waruingi was warm in my nostrils and I could not let Kiambu alone. It is a tribute to his good sense and tact that we did not scrap. For all my interference I had no hand in making the plan for the next operation. This was done by the District Emergency Committee under the chairmanship of the District Commissioner, Mr Lloyd, advised by Peter Hewett.

They decided that the next operation should combine the pseudo gang technique with the newly devised population sweep. We were still not sure exactly where Waruingi was hiding. He might be in the Lari Forest with Kinyiti or he might be just to the north with his own gang or perhaps with Songuru. A pseudo patrol would go into the northern part to find out whether he was there. If he was they would either kill him or—so we thought—drive him to join Kinyiti. The next day the Lari Forest would fall to the biggest imaginable population sweep.

The operation was to take place on August 16th. Eric Holyoak would lead the pseudo patrol.

*Chapter Seventeen*

THE END

## T

A HAD never liked the idea of one European going alone on a pseudo operation in the forest but I did not know quite where to get a second man for Eric's patrol. Any of the Kiambu F.I.A.s would have been suitable but I could see that we might want them all when the main sweep started. If Jacky Miller had still been in Thika he could have gone, or if Pete van Aardt had stayed after the Training Centre had closed he would have been an obvious choice. They had both left. As we looked round we were struck forcibly by the fact that all our old friends had disappeared. In the whole of Nairobi area only Eric and I remained.

Eventually Eric chose a Nairobi F.I.A. called du Bruin to accompany him on his big venture. Du Bruin was a comparative newcomer but he was tough and had been out several times before. Above all Eric liked him.

Du Bruin arrived at Kamiti in time for dinner and Peter Hewett arrived shortly afterwards with the latest news and some rations. We talked for some time about the operation but went to bed early so as to be ready for an early start next day.

The sentry was fast asleep at half-past-three when he was supposed to be waking us but that was perfectly normal, and I woke at precisely the right moment—my alarm clock worked! I first roused Nganga, the cook, and then turned out the rest of the patrol.

Eric and du Bruin soon appeared in the house and started to prepare their disguises. It was a bitterly cold morning and the mist seeped through

the walls and roof to hover round the one pressure lamp that Nganga had managed to get going. Nyoike appeared carrying the looking-glass from my bedroom and put it on the table in the sitting-room. Then he went out and reappeared with a mess-tin full of water and two flat circular tins of black actor's make-up.

I watched from the other side of the room as the two men smeared it on their faces and hands. I was cold and terribly apprehensive. Morale is always a bit low in the early hours but on this occasion I was really frightened as I saw Eric's face disappear behind its coat of paste. Needless to say they were talking cheerfully enough and mobbing up Nyoike a bit as well. I could not explain my feelings and I certainly did not want to communicate any forebodings to Eric.

I walked out of the house and tried to get a grip on myself. The mist was thickest outside the back door where it mingled with the smoke from the fire on which Nganga was cooking the breakfast. I walked smack into the gate of the compound thinking it was opened and was greeted by the sentry's shout:

'Halt, who goes there?' he cried, delighted to be sufficiently awake to carry out his duty.

'Shut up, you bloody fool,' I said.

'Pass friend all's well.'

I could not help smiling as I wandered into Matenjagua's hut.

Inside, the scene was not very different from that in the house except that the men did not have to bother with the blacking. They were collecting kit, putting on their old clothes and cooking their breakfast all at once. They were too busy to bother about me, naturally enough, so I sat down on a bed to watch their fooling and regain my spirits. After a time I went into the house to breakfast. Eric had left but Mbutia was making a good job of four eggs and some steak.

At half past four we piled into two Land-Rovers. I travelled with Eric and Matenjagua in the front while Oleo brought on the rest of the patrol in the second one. We churned along the slippery tracks through the Settled Area and then through the Reserve, past Githunguri and beyond the reservoir. At half past five we reached the edge of the forest, and the patrol got out. Driving had kept my mind occupied to some extent but I was still worried sick. I desperately wanted to say goodbye or good luck or even to shake Eric's hand as he went into the bush, but I knew if I did he would know something was wrong. We did not indulge in emotional exchanges as a rule.

I took the second Land-Rover away and hid it, in case the patrol

needed it in a hurry. I then returned to Ndumberi, after which I went into my office in Nairobi. The rest of the day was spent in normal routine jobs in Thika and Gatundu. In the evening I went to Ndumberi to make certain everything was ready for the operation next morning. The day had not been too bad. Whilst working I had had no time to think about the patrol. But back at Kamiti in the evening all my old fears returned.

I tried to get rid of them by playing a game of draughts with Crook Boy. Although I usually beat him, this time he won half-a-crown off me, but he already owed me ten bob so I was able to pay up by reducing his debt to seven and six. In the end I had to go back to the house and face up to my misgivings.

The first means I thought of for dispelling my fears was to ask myself—Why the dickens was I worried anyway? Even if they did find Waruingi and his guards, what did that matter? Waruingi was only another poor fool like the rest and Eric was the most experienced leader of pseudo gangs in the whole country. Furthermore he had the very best of our men with him, men who had proved themselves time and again, men like Matenjagua, Kimani, Kihara and Gicheru. There was certainly no cause for alarm.

So much for logic. It left me exactly where I started. Having worked it all out I was even more alarmed than before. There was a persistent ache low down behind my eyes and a gripped feeling just forward of the kidneys. Our surviving pressure lamp was not doing well and there was a dismal look about the dining-room cupboard as I went to get some prefabricated cheer from the whisky bottle. Needless to say the results were precisely the reverse of what they were meant to be.

My next ploy was to try and discover why, bearing in mind the apparent straightforward nature of the operation, I was so worried. I had no difficulty in working that out. Firstly I had grown to like three or four of the people on the patrol a great deal. Eric, Matenjagua, Kimani and one or two others had been with me for a good long time and what had started as a working partnership had changed imperceptibly into strong friendship. Secondly I was very tired indeed, and, after two years' labour, physically run down—far lower than I should have been.

Now, I have found that it is perfectly possible to have the best of friends under command and to hazard their safety when necessary without any discomfort, providing one is really fit physically. I would go further and say that, for me at any rate, the best results only come after a bond of friendship has developed between myself and my subordinates, for the simple reason that I am too idle to work really hard except for people I

like. I must, however, stress again that it is only possible to work with such people when one is physically fit, and therefore mentally robust.

When feeble, it is only possible to work with people who do not matter. I was no longer fit or really robust mentally. The people concerned were my friends, therefore I was upset. That seemed the only conclusion,

Having worked this all out, I thought I should feel better. But far from it. I could not get away from the feeling that next day someone who had meant a lot to me for a long time was going to die. I was quite right.

It was obvious that I was not going to be able to do any serious work, so I decided to turn in good and early. I went to bed at half-past-eleven. Luckily I can always sleep at once: I lie on my right side and think of something much more attractive than sheep.

Next morning I was too busy to spend much time brooding over my fears. I got up while it was still dark and went first to Kahawa where a screening and hooded-man operation was in progress. Our contingent was being organized by Derek Prophet from Nairobi so as to leave Peter Hewett free for the main operation.

Next I went to the operations room at Kiambu to see if there had been any more news on the gang movements. I discovered that a Kikuyu Guard patrol had heard heavy firing coming from inside the north tip of the Lari Forest a short time earlier. This was the area in which Eric was operating. By now it would be surrounded by a cordon of Kikuyu Guard and tribal police. The battle had started and I was twenty miles away. I jumped into my Land-Rover and went at top speed to the forest edge.

For the first half of the journey the Reserve was much as usual but as I got nearer my destination the tracks and paths became congested with people, mostly women, moving in the same direction as myself. There were hundreds and hundreds of them, all carrying their pangas. Dressed as they were in their gaily coloured frocks, the scene was reminiscent of a major sporting function in England such as a football match or the Derby. Our Land-Rover nosed its way through the crowd and eventually reached the forest edge.

My next problem was to discover what Eric had found out. The people for the sweep were still getting into position, shepherded by the D.O., the D.O.'s K.G. and the police. Superintendent Ackers of Kiambu was in overall command as far as we could judge. There was still time for us to make minor alterations to the plan if we got good up-to-date information.

Unfortunately I did not know where Eric was. If he had been in an action and killed all his enemy he would doubtless take off his disguise

and come out of the forest. But he had not done so. If the enemy had escaped to the north he would also have come out, because he could not follow them into the Operation Dante area. The only likely reason for his non-appearance was that the enemy had moved south across the main forest track into the area which was being cordoned. In this case Eric would be lying up near the track waiting for a D.O., K.G. or police inspector to come past with a vehicle so that he could whip out his men without having them seen by the populace. I started to drive very slowly along the track stopping often to give him a chance of making his presence known. After half an hour I was getting impatient and a little worried. I had stopped for about the tenth time and was gazing hopefully into the bush when he appeared. Within a moment his whole patrol were crowded under the canopy of my Land-Rover.

Eric's news was encouraging. Yesterday they had found no terrorists but had come on recent tracks of a small gang just before dark. They had not been able to find the gangsters before nightfall but the gang had evidently made their camp near by because the patrol ran into them soon after first light.

One of Gitimu's ex-terrorists was leading and he clearly made out Songuru, Kenya Tea and one or two others of Waruingi's personal gang as he blundered into their camp. Eric was close behind and for one moment it looked as if the gang were taken in by our pseudos. Songuru started to talk to our leading man but at that moment Kenya Tea noticed something was wrong and yelled a warning. Instantly they darted out of the circle in all directions.

The patrol opened fire immediately and two terrorists were killed outright. Eric himself fired a burst from his patchet into Kenya Tea and then did the same for Songuru. Neither fell but they found Kenya Tea soon afterwards about two hundred yards away. She was dead when they found her. The patrol tracked Songuru by the blood marks but he succeeded in crossing the road making straight for the area which we intended to sweep with the women.

We sat down quietly and worked out what it all meant. Eric had found the little local group under Songuru and had also found some of Waruingi's personal gang with them. Kenya Tea would be unlikely to stray far from her master. On the other hand Waruingi had definitely not been in the camp which they had found. Had he been there, he would have been recognized by at least two of the patrol.

By far the most likely answer was that he had previously been with

Songuru but had slipped into the bigger bit of forest to the south to visit Kinyiti Goko, leaving most of his friends behind. If that was so we were in luck, as the women might come upon them as they swept.

I dropped Eric and his men off at their Land-Rover with instructions to get cleaned up and then return to help with the rest of the day's work. I drove off as hard as I could to find the Superintendent and tell him the news from the contact.

As I drove round the cordon I saw the line of cutters start to move slowly forward. It was a wonderful though terrifying sight to see the way in which they all hacked their way through the undergrowth, leaving a swathe of cleared ground behind them as they went. Naturally they only cleared the undergrowth: they did not try cutting down the big trees. Suddenly I saw one of the Kikuyu Guard, who was interspersed with the cutters, raise his rifle and swing it round in front of himself. For a moment I thought he had seen a Mau Mau but there was no bang. Instead about thirty women dived on to the spot indicated. There was a terrific mass of seething and struggling bodies. I caught a glimpse of a small furry body and two tiny horns. The women had found a little buck and were all pulling in different directions. There was a moment of turmoil and then the scrum broke up: the lucky ones each had a bit of the animal which they had literally torn limb from limb. They stuffed it inside their satchels or tied it into their belts. For once they would get a good feed of meat out of the operation if nothing more.

I moved on round the cordon still looking for the Superintendent but failed to find him. I was turning round to come back when I was stopped by a tribal policeman who said that he had been in ambush since dawn and that a short time ago two or three terrorists had walked into his position. He and his friend had opened up but unfortunately they had both chosen the leading man to shoot at, with the result that between them they had got one very dead terrorist, the remainder having escaped.

I took my Land-Rover as near as I could to the spot and told the T.P. to have the body put on board. It really was in a shocking state, with twenty-eight bullet holes in it—more like a cullender than a corpse. I intended to get it identified by the first ex-terrorist I could find. Like a fool I had not got one with me. I then resumed my search for the Superintendent.

I found him sitting on the grass by a track junction overlooking the forest edge. He was in a good position to watch the progress of the operation and was also well placed for seeing the D.O.'s and police inspectors who were travelling round the edge of the operation. I told

him our news **and he said that he intended to have a short meeting in half an hour's time to decide on whether to continue cutting or whether to speed matters up by getting the women to sweep forwards towards the stops on the far side of the patch of forest concerned.**

The Superintendent also told me that there had been another engagement at the opposite end of the line to where I had been and that one or two terrorists had been killed. Peter Hewett had gone off to have a look at the bodies.

By this time the sun was getting hot and the body in my car was beginning to smell, so I threw it out under some bushes to wait till I could get someone to identify it. Soon afterwards Eric reappeared and we went to the Superintendent's discussion, which was a masterly affair lasting two minutes. At the end of that time everyone knew exactly what to do: cutting was to stop and sweeping was to start.

Eric and I decided that the best chance of finding something interesting lay in going to the opposite end of the area being swept. We arrived just in time to hear a burst of firing from the line of sweepers and to see the usual gaggle of cutters lunge forward on to something which was struggling on the ground in front of them. We left our car and raced to the spot just in time to see a human body disintegrate under the slicing pangas of the girls. Although there was not much left, Eric was able to identify Songuru. This occurred in a piece of fairly thick bush.

We decided that we would stay with the line of sweepers for a short while to see if anything else turned up. For the best part of an hour we pushed on but nothing happened. Several deer were caught in the line and were torn to pieces in the same way as the one I saw earlier in the day.

After a time we broke out of the trees into a large clearing. Instead of seeing just the few people to our right and left we were able to see several hundred on each side of us. At that moment a man with a rifle shot at our line from about fifty yards in front. The whole line dropped to the ground in a most impressive fashion, as though they had been trained troops. For a moment no one knew what to do next and then the terrorist jumped to his *feet* and made a dash for cover. Instantly the Kikuyu Guard on the line opened up. I was able to see where some of the shots kicked up a jet of grass and earth, fully twenty yards in front of their target, while others were hitting trees overhead or to either side. For a moment I thought he was going to get away but then I saw what was probably a charge of buckshot hit the man in the back and down he came.

We had seen Songuru hacked up and his documents spoilt by the

savagery of the ladies and we had no wish to see the same thing happen again. The victim was probably no one important but he might be. As soon as we saw him drop we ran forward to try and get to the body before the rabble arrived.

We just managed to get to the body in time and I hurled myself on to it to get the papers from his pockets while Eric held the crowd at bay. By now their blood was up and they were determined to have their sport. I think I should have been carved up as well had it not been for the fact that another terrorist was seen at that moment and all eyes turned in that direction. Eric went off to salvage what he could of that man and I stayed with the first casualty.

Luckily Peter Hewett and Mick Green arrived at that moment and one of their terrorists recognized the corpse I had been trying to guard as being Kinyiti Goko. Soon after we retrieved Eric's man but he was no one important. We slung the bodies in Mick Green's Land-Rover and Peter asked him to take them all to Uplands for the time being. I remembered the one I had collected early in the day and not wishing to see it again I asked Mick to take that away also.

By this time the best of the day was over and the girls were beginning to drift off home. They had done magnificent work. They thought the whole tiling was a huge joke and had killed anything that moved for the mere joy of doing so. We all knew that these same people had been sheltering and assisting the gangs for years and that they would probably continue to do so. We were all sure that the day's performance was no indication of any new approach to the problem of loyalty to the Government. The day's work had been good clean fun and they had been enjoying themselves. That was all.

By about five o'clock the F.I.A.s came round to see us; they had left their places in the sweeping lines as these had disintegrated. We began to tot up the bag. We had certainly had a very good day. No less than fifteen thousand of the local people had turned out to help and between them they had chopped down a large piece of forest. Several terrorists had escaped but we had killed plenty more, including Waruingi's best General—Kinyiti Goko, his liaison leader with the Reserve—Songuru, and his beloved—Kenya Tea. We could hardly have hoped for better luck except for the fact that Waruingi himself had once more slipped through the net.

We were all in tearing spirits as we prepared to go home for a wash and a drink. I remember asking myself why I had been so worried twenty-four hours earlier. I had thought that one of the people who meant a lot to me was going to die but they were all around me, Eric, Matenjagua, Kimani

and the rest. They were laughing away, trying to pinch each other's souvenirs and generally enjoying themselves.

Just then a Land-Rover came into sight round the bend in the road. It was Green who had returned from dumping the bodies at Uplands. He got out and came straight up to me without any expression on his face at all.

'Well, we've got him at last,' he said. 'The body you left under the bushes for me was Waruingi Kurier.'

Waruingi? Waruingi...! Waruingi...! How could I not have known? I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, but I felt nearer to tears than laughter.

For eighteen months I had always had Waruingi at the back of my mind. He had come to mean more to me than anyone in Kenya! And now, he was dead. As we drove through the darkening Reserve back to Kamiti, Eric and the men were still in high spirits. For them it was just one more success.

I was looking further ahead. I could see that the end of Waruingi meant the end of terrorism in Nairobi Area. That in turn meant the end of our organization.

I had been striving for this very thing with all my strength but now that I had achieved it I was left desolate. Soon the post at Kamiti would break up. Eric would go off to start his career as a civilian. Matenjagua, Kimani and the rest would disperse around the Reserves to their homes or jobs. Admittedly it would not happen in the next few days, but it could not be long delayed.

No doubt in after years I could find my old friends again but reminiscence *is* no substitute for companionship. We drew up at Kamiti. Nganga came out to us with the light. No more time for sentimental day dreams. We must feed and then get along to Ndumberi to start work on documents and interrogation.